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## *A Faith that Works* *The Epistle of James*

***You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (2:24)***

***“The Existence and Nature of Demonic Wisdom”***

**August 30, 2015**

**Sermon Text:** James 3

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Cor 2-3

### **Introduction-**

I want us to consider together this morning how demonic wisdom, also called the spirit of this world, works to parade itself as God’s wisdom. And I will suggest to you that many, many Christians and churches are in fact dominated by demonic wisdom rather than the wisdom of God, all the while

thinking that they are thinking and acting in accordance with the wisdom from above.

**Jas 3:14-18** 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.

Let’s first look back at the first part of chapter 3 and see how James leads us into this subject of true vs false wisdom by pointing out the evil of the unregenerate tongue-

**Jas 3:1-12** 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.

Here is a prime example of what James' purpose is in this letter. He is preaching to a body of people who claim the name of Christ but include some who are counterfeits. This is the key to understanding the Epistle of James. As we have already seen, James is NOT teaching that the Christian's tongue remains "a restless evil full of deadly poison, blessing God one moment and cursing God's people the next. You see how very wrong we will go if we approach James with the idea that he is addressing entirely genuine believers. "Your tongue is untamed, your speech which reveals the state of your heart is set on fire by hell as it spews its deadly poison." Such thinking will inevitably lead us to using the law as a means of subduing our sin, and it simply will NOT work-

Col 2:18-23 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, (19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. (20) If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— (21) "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (22)

(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? (23) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Look again:

(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.

The believer's heart is no longer a salt pond. If you truly know Christ, you are not what you were – He has indeed tamed you. While we still battle with our flesh and we do not obey the Lord perfectly, we are not longer identified as a salt pond that spews forth “water” that only gives death. The Christian does not bless God one minute and the next curse God's people as a course of his life.

One sign that demonic wisdom reigns in a local church then is the teaching and belief that a person can be a genuine Christian and yet spew deadly poison and salt water from his mouth. That he can belong to Christ yet as a characteristic of his life he praises God and then turns right around and curses others.

What we are describing here then is the reviler. Learn that word. Get familiar with the marks of the reviler. Our churches are infested with this kind and it ought not to be. The reviler poisons others with his words. He is restless so that he cannot sleep at night unless he has cursed God's people. He uses high-handed, religious sounding language and can offer public prayers in the most pious sounding terms, then turn right around and curse you and poison you with that same mouth.

Rom 3:10-18 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (13) "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." (14) "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." (15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16) in their paths are ruin and misery, (17) and the way of peace

they have not known." (18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Christian, you are no longer such a person. James is not saying that you are. He is calling out the counterfeits, exposing them for what they really are, and pronouncing God's curse upon them if they don't repent. He is saying "your church must not continue to be characterized by people like this. This is not Christ in His reality and beauty. It must be dealt with and exposed."

Psa 58:3-7 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies. (4) They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, (5) so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter. (6) O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! (7) Let them vanish like water that runs away; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted.

Now, let's move on and consider in more detail this matter of a demonic wisdom and how prevalent it is today *in the professing Christian church-*

How many of us have grown up with the notion, because this is what we have been taught, that life in our local church is just going to have a regular stream of things like jealousy, selfish ambition, people who say hurtful

things regularly – where there is "disorder and every vile practice" but because of Christ and His grace, we all just put up with it and forgive and forbear and try to do the best we can?

Let me describe for you what this church was like 22 years ago and then we will put the light of James' teaching here on it and see it for what it really was.

1. The music "ministry" was a performance stage for the pianist/choir director. Very early on she announced that the music was her realm and that she would not work with any team, including me as the pastor. She threw a visible tantrum right here in the front of the sanctuary minutes before the worship service because of some minor change we made. She stormed out of two meetings we had in which we tried to get her to work with us. And yet over and over I had people tell me that she was the kindest, sweetest, Christian lady they knew.

2. The church was largely run by a man who exalted himself openly, having convinced many of his deep godliness, yet once more he made it plain behind the scenes that his word was to be obeyed or else. Ultimately he stormed out in a fit of anger.

3. Another man who paraded as a servant of Christ but did not belong to

him at all, came up to me after a service one Sunday and said “the way we do things here is that the pastor always comes out to my farm on Mondays and we talk about what we are going to do as far as decisions in the church.” I told him that wasn’t going to happen, that was why we have a church board. He has hated me to this day and I still get wicked looks from him at the store 22 years later as he parades in another church as a wonderful Christian.

4. There was another man who always refused to serve in any capacity in the church, but whose “ministry” was outside the church, organizing “big” events. He was oh so flattering at the beginning and praised our ministry here and acted fully supportive, until he realized that we were not going to make his pet ministry the central focus of this church. Literally overnight his smile turned to a hateful glare and he walked away, still being hateful toward us to this day.

5. Another man who also is touted in this community to this day as a model Christian man used to bring prisoners doing time for sex offenses to the worship services here. He did not properly supervise them and we put a stop to it. His response? “This is my ministry and I am going to take it someplace else then” – telling me this

minutes before the worship service began.

6. A woman who played the organ we used to have here turned her hatred on us when, one Sunday, we decided to have just the piano accompany one particular hymn and not the organ. After the service (she sat at the organ visibly pouting during the service) she angrily stormed up to us and said “you have stolen my ministry from me!”

I can tell you that these kinds of things are *typical* in many, many local churches. And these culprits are seen as “brothers and sisters in Christ” who we just have to be patient with and “love them.” But what does the Lord say about them? What is HIS wisdom? Because I submit to you that this kind of thinking is in fact that demonic wisdom James is exposing.

What do you see in all this? What is the common denominator? It is this: *jealousy and selfish ambition*. Over and over again churches are thrown into disorder and chaos and misery by these very kinds of people, and once more – WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT THESE KINDS OF THINGS ARE NORMAL IN THE BODY OF CHRIST!!

Now, listen very carefully to the word of God as James tells us what these things REALLY are:

Jas 3:13-18 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.

NOTE: In other words, *stop being a hypocrite. Admit what you really are.* Stop boasting about your “godliness” because you are not godly. If you are one of these kinds of people I have just been describing, you do not know Christ and He does not know you. Your “Christianity” is a sham, and worse – it is of the devil.

(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.

NOTE: See it? Would you want to come to church and sit in pews alongside demons? Well that is exactly what is happening in so many churches every Sunday. The spirit of the demonic is in fact running the church! How do we know? Because jealousy and selfish ambition exist. In fact, they characterize so many “Christians” and churches. How can you know? Because as James says, there is disorder and every vile practice going

on. This is NOT a case of mere difficult personalities, or of Christians who are still rough around the edges. No. This is Satan. It is the kingdom of darkness. No, that was not just old Fred or good old Linda who you know, really love the Lord and mean well but who have a bit of a dark side sometimes that we just turn a blind eye to and think the best of them. No. This is the kingdom of the enemy and these are his emissaries sent in among us to create that havoc and disorder, to destroy, to lie and lead us away from Christ, and to bring us into bondage.

In contrast:

(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.

Let’s consider the character of God’s wisdom:

1. It is pure. That is, it is not polluted by any drop of evil. It is pure spring water without any salt.

2. It is peaceable. It produces peace. It restores relationships. It does not produce strife, but it makes for unity. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, says God’s word.

And we all get polluted by their evil, stained by it.

3. These children of the devil are not gentle. They are without mercy. They are of the world and their thinking is from below, not from above. They are therefore bullies. They seek power and control and self glory.

4. God's wisdom, the wisdom from above, the wisdom given by the Spirit of Christ, is *open to reason*. Not so the wicked. You cannot reason with them. You may as well try to reason with a grizzly bear who is about to tear you to shreds. In other words, *you cannot reach their heart and convince them to be kind*. Not gonna happen.

Jud 1:10-11 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. (11) Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

No, the way to deal with them is this:

Pro 22:10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.

I strongly encourage each one of us to give more consideration to James 3 this week. Think carefully on these

things. Wake up from our slumbering and the delusions of false teaching we have been fed for so long about the nature of the Christian and life in the body of Christ. James lays it out clearly for us. Whatever it may have seemed to be two decades ago, life in this church was in fact dominated not by the Spirit of Christ in His true wisdom, but by this:

(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.

May the Lord cause us all to grow in this true wisdom, giving us the ability more and more to discern that which is earthly, not of the Spirit, and even demonic.