

Introduction

- Context of encouraging practical Christian living
- Tongue was one area where we need to obey, to translate into action what we believe
- Here are a number of other areas, perhaps only loosely linked together but revolving round that same hub:
 - submission, in practical action, to God's will

Wisdom (3:13-18)

- What's your image of a wise person?
 - picture we probably first bring to mind is of someone who has insights, who understands, who chooses well, perhaps well-placed in society because their ability to choose well has helped them be promoted
- James' image isn't quite like that!
 - wisdom isn't about thoughts, its about action!
 - and its about the attitudes that under-pin those actions
- **Someone is wise** when they love peace so much they go and apologise for their mistake, their selfishness, their thoughtlessness
- **Someone is wise** when they see fault in someone else, but act gently & mercifully, seeking to see the best in the other person, looking for ways to support and encourage them in their situation: considerate
- **Someone is wise** when an something comes up that would be of considerable advantage to them comes up - **a promotion, an offer of friendship, a windfall** - but they don't immediately jump at it, seeking to see whether it would be of equal value to those around them, family, friends, colleagues
- That kind of wisdom will lead to peace
 - that kind of wisdom demonstrates humility
 - that kind of wisdom will bear a harvest of righteousness

Friendship (4:1-6)

- Turns attention to relationships within the church fellowship:
 - same kinds of things as he's talked about as wise/unwise
- Maybe, at first glance, we don't recognise ourselves here:
 - I haven't seen any brawls amongst the congregation since I came to Fintry!
 - I haven't seen any murders!
- But do we put things we want above our relationships with God and with others?
 - do we kill off trust and intimacy by putting space to be by ourselves, or our own pleasures, before other people?
- Then James goes on to point out that putting our own desires:
 - for entertainment, for wealth, to rest, for pleasure...
 - before other people, leading to fights and quarrels
- All of that is committing adultery with the world, being unfaithful to God!
 - choosing to be a friend of the world rather than a friend of God!
- Adultery -> exclusive relationship with God -> envies
 - humility - puts own desires to one side

Submission (4:7-10)

- Heart, turning point of passage
- Submission to God:
 - admitting his ways of doing things are better
- Grieve over sin:
 - its serious

- so serious Jesus died in your place!!

Slander (4:11-12)

- Particular words against another person
- Great temptation to talk about other people:
 - go to a conference, meet up with people, ask after each other...
 - imagine that you have concerns about someone, about how they are getting on with God, what they are preaching, some relationships or decisions that they have taken
 - terribly, terribly easy to pass judgement, with word or look or gesture, to put a seed of doubt about that other person's standing into the mind of whoever is listening to us
 - or to talk about someone else's character...
- James says when we do that we are usurping God's place, making ourselves Judge!
 - don't do it!
 - rather, consciously seek to build up and praise - without flattering - our brothers and sisters

The Future (4:13-17)

- How do we plan?
 - provisional Holiday Club dates and Lucia & Ewan's wedding in July 2004!
 - school resumption dates in August 2004!
 - prompted by all this, I went and dug out dates for Easter through till 2010!! (4th of April, in case you are interested!)
 - holidays, work commitments, for me what I'm planning on preaching on... all of these go in the diary!
- All of that, in itself, is not a problem.
- James is probing at the **attitude we take to the future**:
 - do we think of it as our life, or as God's life?
 - James is not advocating mere tokenism!!
 - **adding the words "if it is the Lord's will"...**
- Its the attitude that lies behind that - **which may well spill over into our words, but which is certainly not limited to them!**
 - and that attitude is to be one of **humility**
 - our time is a gift from God, to be used for his glory

Conclusion

- My way? God's way?
 - incredibly powerful driving attitude of our society
 - personal choice is paramount
 - *"its their own choice, isn't it?" - so many parents of children who are now living with their partners!!*
 - what our priorities are, our choices, our ambitions...
 - what our friendships are, both those that we spend time and the way that we treat them
- Sin is still serious:
 - mortally wounded, defeated, but dangerous!