

True Wisdom vs. Man's Wisdom

James 3:13-18

We spent 3 weeks on verses 1-12 in chapter 3.

We could have entitled the messages – wisdom in using the tongue.

As we said before, in many ways – the Book of James is like a NT version of the book of Proverbs.

It is full of practical advice and exhortation.

Today, we begin a new section that I think runs from 3:13 all the way to 4:6.

The theme is WISDOM true and false.

Another predominate theme is PEACE as opposed to war and conflict.

We live in a world full of conflict.

Pastor James tells us why in this particular passage.

I. True Wisdom Manifests itself in Godly Conduct 3:13

James moves from OUR SPEECH to OUR ACTIONS.

A. A Reminder to Christian Leaders

Who is wise and understanding among you?

Certainly, it should be your pastors and teachers -- **3:1**

If the teachers are fools – what will become of the people?

Yet we see that all around us.

The blind lead the blind and both fall into the ditch.

Foolishness is proclaimed as wisdom – and self-improvement preaching takes the place of Biblical exposition.

By self-improvement – I mean the kind of advice you could get from Dr. Phil or Oprah Winfrey.

Teachers ARE responsible for what they teach.
We do not have the luxury to parade our own ideas or philosophies.

As Christian ministers – the number one question that we must ask ourselves in sermon preparation is – WHAT IS GOD SAYING HERE?

B. Talk is Cheap – Action has Value

Please don't think I am devaluing preaching.
God has ordained PREACHING to make His will known.

But – talk without action is worthless.

And the wrong kind of talk or the wrong kind of action leads to all the confusion and sin that we see in this very practical passage.

Who is wise?
Who is understanding?
We will find the answer -- by how they live their life!

Notice in the qualifications given for ministers – speaking is listed – but speaking ability is not the main qualification. It is THE LIFE!

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Actions do not necessarily speak louder than words.
But actions can INVALIDATE even TRUE words that are spoken.

C. James and “Good Conduct”

As I have said before, some have seen James as an epistle preoccupied with Good Works – while the rest of the NT focuses on grace.

I hope I have convinced you that Pastor James DOES NOT have a different theology than Paul or John or Peter. **1:18**

James loves the practical.
Prove your good theology BY your works.

“let him show” – reminds us of 2:18 – **“Show me your faith w/o your works and I will show you my faith by my works.”**

Often the emphasis we find in James – and certainly in this particular passage (v. 13) is CONDUCT. And again -- in that James is not alone – as Paul, John and Peter all spend a great deal of time on this same subject.

Just look at these particular passages from the pen of Peter.

1 Peter 1:13-16 ³ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ **but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,** ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”^[c]

2:11-12 ¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² **having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles,** that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

3:1, 2, 15, 16, 17 Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, **they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,** ² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God^[d] in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ **having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.** ¹⁷ For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.^[c]

¹¹ **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

D. How these Good Works are to be Done

“In the meekness of wisdom.”

The phrasing is a little unusual.

It is true, James does have a style that is all his own.

Good deed done day after day after day can be called good conduct.

Meekness here can also mean “humility”.

-- Humility is a CHRISTIAN GRACE.

-- Humility in James day was a counter-cultural grace.

The Greeks loved showmanship – flair and charisma.

The Greeks felt humility showed weakness and a servile attitude.

Real men are bold and courageous – not meek or humble.

What did Christ say about himself?

*[Matthew 11:29](#) -- Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart;
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Humility is a Christian grace.

Sometimes it is good to define something by what it IS NOT.

Christian Humility is NOT:

Pride – it is the polar opposite of pride.

We don't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

Self-centeredness – it is GOD-centeredness.

Selfishness – it is esteeming others better than ourselves

Not a Lack of Confidence – Christian humility puts its confidence and trust in THE LORD.

II. The Source of Conflicts 3:14-16

A. Conflicts Arise from the Heart v. 14

Bitter envy and self-seeking.
Sinful jealousy and selfish ambition.

Mark it down – here is the source of CONFLICTS.

Conflicts in your marriage.
Conflicts between parent and child.
Conflicts in the church.
Conflicts even between NATIONS!

B. The Spring (Source) of these Conflicts v. 15

The spring or fountain does not give both sweet and bitter water.
You can tell the source by the quality.

We find the fruit of bitter envy and self-seeking.
What is the source?

Is it from Heaven?
Is it from God?
Are these the fruits of the Spirit?

No – it is earthly – and not in a good way.
It is sensual – in the wrong use of that word.
It is DEMONIC.

C. The Result of Envy and Self-Seeking v. 16

Why do we have the interpersonal problems we have?

It's THE OTHER PERSONS fault. ☺

OF COURSE!

It's HIS fault.

It's HER fault.

Do you find yourself in the center of a lot of conflicts?

Are there often issues that need to be addressed?

Husband and wife issues.

Work related issues.

Church issues.

Christian friend – Pastor James is telling us the source of these conflicts – and the first place we should look is **RIGHT IN HERE** (point to your heart).

Blessed are the peacemakers.

The Bible never says blessed are the critics.

Where there is Envy and self-seeking

Where there is jealousy and selfish ambition

There will be **CONFUSION** and **EVERY EVIL WORK**.

1. **CONFUSION** (or disorder) – in the Greek –

Reminds us of the **DOUBLE-MINDED** man 1:8

he is **UNSTABLE** in all his ways.

Unstable a form of the word confusion.

And the double-speaking tongue of 3:8 – **unruly** evil.

Unruly a form of the word confusion and unstable.

2. Every Evil Work

The wording is purposely vague.

It is not a SPECIFIC evil that is in view.

It all ALL KINDS OF EVIL – tracing their source back to the heart – and causing men to rise up against men – and even brother against brother.

And the source of all this disorder and evil?

Not from heaven.

Earthly

Sensual

Demonic!

III. The Way of Peace 3:17-18

Notice the list that James gives. A couple of these words are unique to James and used only here in the NT.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Look at the list:

Pure – the opposite of every EVIL work.

Peaceable, gentle, willing to yield (in other words submissive – willing to listen to reason – willing to change one’s mind)– all forms of the godly trait of HUMILITY

And opposites of the devilish traits of envy and selfish ambition .

Full of mercy and good fruits

Without partiality and without hypocrisy

The crop that this type of person brings forth??? **PEACE!**

The fighter – the one who MUST have his own rights??? **WAR 4:1a**

Conclusion:

Galatians 5:19

Here we find James and Paul in agreement once again.

Their list of evils and virtues is not the same.

It is obvious one has not copied from the other.

It is also obvious they are BOTH speaking the same truth.

1. The works of the flesh -- the earthly, sensual and demonic 5:19-21

2. The fruit of the Spirit 5:22-26

Look again at verse 26.

That could have easily come from the Pen of Pastor James.