

James 3:13–18

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

<sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

<sup>15</sup> This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

<sup>16</sup> For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

<sup>18</sup> Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

### ***"Wisdom From Above"*** **James 3:13-18**

INTRO:

What is ***"Wisdom?"*** To many this is an abstract question that ranks right up there with the question Pilate posed to Jesus, ***"What is truth?"*** But to the Jewish mind, wisdom is not esoteric or abstract at all. The Hebrew concept of wisdom is very practical. A wise person is one who exercises discipline of mind, who can make all of the correct and morally upright choices in any situation. This is the kind of wisdom James had in mind as he began his discussion of wisdom.

Most of us would like to think that we are wise. We want to believe we can carefully apply the knowledge God gives us in His Word to the situations we face in life. Because this is so, James addresses his challenge to us and others. James also demonstrated what true godly wisdom looks and acts like, and contrasts that with counterfeit, demonic wisdom.

***I. A Challenge to Those Who Think Themselves Wise (v. 13)***

***II. Unmasking False Wisdom (v. 14-16)***

***III. Describing Godly Wisdom (v. 17, 18)***

***I. A Challenge to Those Who Think Themselves Wise (v. 13)***

A. James' transition from the subject of the tongue to the issue of wisdom is just a simple question. ***"Who is wise and understanding among you?"*** The word wise is defined differently in the Hebrew mind than the Greek mind. The Hebrew concept of wisdom is a supremely practical one. James did not ask, ***"Which of you knows all the***

*truth about the realities of the world.*” Rather, he asked, *“Which of you think you possess the moral insight and practical skill to make right decisions in life?”* The second word in the phrase is even more interesting. The word is the word from which we derive our philosophical term **epistemology**. **Epistemology** is the study of how we know what we know. It is the study of the methods and limits of knowledge. The word here means the knowledge of an expert. Putting it together, James asked, ***“Who among you are morally wise and practically able to apply knowledge to life?”***

B. Many, who heard this question, wanted to put up their hands and say, *“Yep, James, that’s me!”* Yet, James immediately posed on those who think themselves wise a considerable challenge. If you raised your hand, then you need to show your wisdom, not by parading it ostensibly, but by living it out humbly in your life. Wisdom should produce two things.

***“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.”***

The ***“let Him”*** is an imperative. This is a command, ***“He must.”***

1. The first thing is ***“good”***, as in pleasant, wholesome, attractive, morally upright, behavior. Your life will reflect the evidence of the transforming power of God in you.

2. Second, you will do your works with ***“meekness.”*** The concept of meekness is one of the qualities we are to learn from being yoked with our Lord. Meekness is not using all the power and authority at our command. Rather, it is being willing to give up our rights and privileges for the Lord. This is an attitude that comes to us from *“a healthy understanding of our own unworthiness before God and a desire for Him to receive all the glory in our dealings with other people.”*

## ***II. Unmasking False Wisdom (v. 14-16)***

A. We can almost hear those folks who were listening to James' letter saying, *“Now wait one cotton picking minute, James. How will anyone know I am wiser than everyone else, if I don't toot my own horn?”* James addressed them in **verse 14**.

***“But if you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.”***

The two qualities James labeled as part of false wisdom are in direct contrast to the ***“good and meek”*** qualities characterize true wisdom. False wisdom is ***“jealous or envious.”*** When we are envious we indulge in selfishly motivated criticisms of others. The second term means to produce strife, motivated by selfish ambition. Here James described someone promoting his own agenda for purely self serving motives.

B. Those whose wisdom is characterized by jealousy, selfish ambition, and strife will be prone to do what the rest of **verse 14** says. They will **“boast.”** Instead of being meek, they will exalt their own wisdom and their own selves. Let’s read what God said through James about this kind of **“wisdom.”**

**vs.15-16** **“This wisdom does not descend (out of) from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”**

### **III. Describing Godly Wisdom (v. 17, 18)**

If this is what ungodly wisdom looks like and what it produces, what does the other side of the coin look like? How can we identify Godly wisdom?

**v. 17-18** **“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**

A. Godly wisdom is, **first pure!** We are going to talk about how willing godly wisdom is to make peace. However, it is never peace at any price. This wisdom is first and foremost, holy and righteous. How can it be otherwise when it comes from God who is holy?

B. It does not look to stir up conflict without a cause. It is gentle. Kindness is at its roots. And it is **“open to reason.”** Willing to yield personal privilege and gains for the benefit of the Lord. It is also **“full of mercy and good fruits.”** It produces morally upright and helpful works.

C. Two other characteristics also stood out in James' mind. The first is that **“it is impartial.”** Godly wisdom never plays favorites. It does not give special treatment to the rich or the beautiful! Second, it is **“not hypocritical.”** It is genuine. It does not hide behind a mask.

D. And it is in the last place, very productive. **“Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”** Those who are wise in this way, produce righteousness in others. Actually it is probably better to say God uses them to produce a harvest of righteousness in others. We do not sow the seeds that produce righteousness very easily if we are fighting over self-centered goals.

Time to do some self-examination. What kind of wisdom characterizes our lives? Are we living proof that God's wisdom reigns supreme in our hearts or do we find our hearts filled with bitter jealousy and strife? What are we willing to do about it?

### **Hymn #395 Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord**

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