

## What Help Do We Need?

[James 3:13-18](#)

James, Day 16

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

- James 3:13-18, ESV

When I was young, I remember trying hard to loosen a bolt only to have my dad point out that I was trying to turn it the wrong way and was actually tightening it. That's that day I learned, "Lefty loosy, righty tighty. Once you stop trying to do the wrong thing, you can start doing the right thing. Later in my childhood, I remember trying to saw wood and getting frustrated, only to learn I was putting too much pressure on the blade. "Let the blade do the work," was the lesson I learned that day.

Last time, we saw that James 3 is not telling us that we should tame our tongues, much less giving us direction for a self-help program of tongue-taming. So, once we stop trying hard to tame our tongues, a frustrating and unfulfilling task, we can turn our attention to what James 3 is teaching us: We need heavenly wisdom to free us from ourselves.

Much more than a self-help program, James 3 gives us a sharp contrast between two competing types of wisdom, one from the world that is unspiritual and demonic, and the other from heaven and which leads to true righteousness. What James calls us to do is to live a life which displays in meekness, in humility, the true fruit of heavenly wisdom.

In other words, in humility, we need to realize that we can't tame our tongues and speak great words of wisdom and understanding. What we can do is humbly confess our need and receive from God His wisdom, the wisdom that comes from above, and live our lives in harmony with it. So, what does this wisdom look like? Well, James tells us first of all what it does not look like: It is not characterized by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

Rather than a self-focused orientation, the wisdom from above is "*first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*" This kind of wisdom comes only from God, and He must write it on our hearts by His Holy Spirit. We must, in humility, seek it from Him and then seek to live according to it.

If we live by God's wisdom and not by our own selfishness, we are given a precious promise: "*And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*" We will reap a harvest of true righteousness when we make peace according to God's wisdom, which is first pure and then peaceable, and reject the worldly ways of selfish ambition and bitter jealousy.

What we can see is that we need so much more than just learning how to say the right things. We need deep heart transformation and a divine infusion of heavenly wisdom, May the Lord be pleased to do this work in us, for the glory of His name in our lives!