

WIDOM

JAMES 3:13-18

Text: James 3

Introduction:

As we said last week up to this point in this series of messages “Moving Toward Maturity” we have considered the Christians and His Battles, the Christian and His Bible, the Christians and the Brethern, and the Christian and His Beliefs.

Last week we began to consider the Christian and His Behavior, and James begins with speaking about our tongue. James states that though certain animals can be trained there is no man who can tame his tongue.

We continue this week considering the Christian and His Behavior.

Read Text

We have at our disposal today more knowledge than at any time in history. More information has been produced in the last thirty years than in the previous five thousand.

I read not long ago that information doubles every four years.

The internet has placed at our fingertips more information than we can process.

Notice in this passage we see a question, followed by contrast and comparison, and then a clarification.

The Bible has much to say about wisdom and knowledge.

Someone once said, “Knowledge enables us to take things apart; but wisdom enables us to put things together.

Wisdom can often be learned from some who may be considered simple.

- Patrick, age 10 says, “Never trust a dog to watch your food.”
- Michael, age 14 says, “When your dad is mad and asks you, ‘Do I look stupid?’ don’t answer him.”
- Another once said, “Never tell your mom that her diet is not working.”
- Eileen, age 8 says, “Never try to baptize a cat.”

Though there is much wisdom in what these children said there is more to wisdom than this.

In fact James' whole letter is an explanation about the purpose of trials in the life of a believer. And in order for the purpose of God to be worked out in the believer's life one thing is required, wisdom.

Notice:

1. THE CONTRADICTION OBSERVED (VS. 13-14)

James 3:13-14

¹³ Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

This section applies to everyone in the churches to whom James was writing, true believers and mere professed believer. James is seeking to identify who is truly skilled in the art of righteous living. "In what way are you wise?" he is asking, in effect, "and in what way are you understanding? The answer will reveal not only your inner character but the spiritual condition of your soul."

Illustration:

There was a typical blond. She had long, blond hair, blue eyes, and she was sick of all the blond jokes. One day, she decided to get a make over, so she cut and dyed her hair.

She also went out and bought a new convertible. She went driving down a country road and came across a herd of sheep.

She stopped and called the sheep herder over.

“That’s a nice flock of sheep” she said.

“Well thank you” said the herder.

“Tell you what. I have a proposition for you” said the woman. “If I can guess the exact number of sheep in your flock, can I take one home?”

“Sure” said the sheep herder.

So, the girl sat up and looked at the herd for a second and then replied “382”.

“Wow” said the herder. “That is exactly right. Go ahead and pick out the sheep you want to take home.”

So the woman went and picked one out and put it in her car.

Then, the herder said “Okay, now I have a proposition for you”.

“What is it?” Queried the woman.

“If I can guess the real color of your hair, can I have my dog back?”

James is saying, “If you claim wisdom and understanding show it first by your good behavior, your exemplary lifestyle.” As with faith, wisdom and understanding that are not demonstrated in righteous, godly living are devoid of spiritual value. James goes on to admonish readers to show their wisdom and understanding by their good deeds.

Too often people who are wise in their own eyes are generally arrogant about.

Illustration:

A rider on horseback, many years ago, came across a squad of soldiers who were trying to move a heavy piece of timber.

A corporal stood by, giving lordly orders to “heave.” but the piece of timber was a trifle too heavy for the squad.

“Why don’t you help them?” asked the quiet man on the horse, addressing the important corporal.

“Me? Why, I’m a corporal, sir!”

Dismounting, the stranger carefully took his place with the soldiers.

“Now, all together, boys—heave!” he said. And the big piece of timber slid into place.

The stranger mounted his horse and addressed the corporal.

“The next time you have a piece of timber for your men to handle, corporal, send for the commander-in-chief.”

The horseman was George Washington.

2. THE CONTRAST IN ORIGIN (VS. 15, 17A)

James 3:15

¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

James 3:17

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

We see here as I stated a moment ago a contrast and comparison.

- Heavenly Wisdom vs. Worldly Wisdom
- Right Wisdom vs. Wrong Wisdom
- Pure Wisdom vs. Professed Wisdom
- True Wisdom vs. False Wisdom

There is a “heavenly wisdom” that comes from God, and there is a “man-made wisdom” that does not come from God.

Notice in verse 14 the motivation of wrong or worldly wisdom.

James 3:14

¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

Remember: Motivation is always determined in the heart.

Matthew 15:19

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Proverbs 4:23

²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Note the two motivations for wrong or worldly wisdom.

- Bitter Envy

- Strife or selfish ambition

Notice what James say about this kind of wisdom – “glory not and lie not.”

A professed Christian who is proud, boasting, self-centered, loveless, and arrogant is a fraud.

There is nothing more characteristic of fallen, unredeemed men than being dominated by self.

Notice the motive for true wisdom.

Philippians 2:3-8

³ Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not

every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS IN OPERATION

A. Characteristics of False Wisdom (vs. 15)

James 3:15

¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

The three great enemies of the believer are the world, the flesh, and the devil, which correspond to the three characteristics of false wisdom that James mentions here.

It is earthly (of the world), sensual (of the flesh), and devilish (of the devil).

- False wisdom is earthly, and sensual.

- False wisdom is demonic

1 Timothy 4:1

¹ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

- False wisdom is deceiving and destructive

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. ²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. ²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they

which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

B. Characteristics of True Wisdom (vs. 17)

James 3:17

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

- Pure – Innocent, chaste, holy, and clean
- Peaceable – Peaceful, Quiet, Living at Peace with others and Promote peace among men
- Gentle – Mild and Patient
- Easily to be entreated – Not stubborn or obstinate, having a yielding spirit or disposition
- Full of Mercy and Good Fruits – Forgiving and ready to do every possible act of kindness
- Without Partiality – Without respect of person, not being swayed by self-interests, worldly honor or fear of man
- Without Hypocrisy – without pretending to be what is not, or working under a mask

4. THE COMPARISONS OF THE OUTCOME (VS. 16-18)

James 3:16-18

¹⁶ For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Close:

The beginning of wisdom is a personal relationship with the Lord.

Then we must recognize that real wisdom is from above.