

THE WISDOM OF GOD

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I want us to again look at the Letter that James wrote. You might remember last time I was here, we read through the Letter, pointing out that it is an action book: Faith Alive...really alive faith will show itself by the actions James mentions; really alive faith will motivate Godly actions.

Remember, also: James is a very direct communicator. He "tells it like it is!" So, after a one verse introduction, he hits an area of our life that is very troublesome! Trials and temptations. Boom! There it is. Just accept the fact that they going to happen, he says. In fact embrace them...welcome them as friends, count it all joy... Chapter Two begins with favoritism, showing partiality...doesn't work, if you are a person of faith. Then faith-motivated actions! Faith without actions is as dead as a body without a spirit! Can't get more direct than that! In Chapter Three, he gives us a tongue-lashing about how evil our tongue is! He doesn't say a lot...really anything at all about how to control our tongue, but he lets us know it is an evil always ready to break out!

Then, and this is where I want us to go today: James 3:13-18 The Wisdom of God: "Are there some wise and understanding men among you? Then your lives will be an example of the humility that is born of true wisdom. But if your heart is full of rivalry and bitter jealousy, then do not boast of your wisdom—don't deny the truth that you must recognize in your inmost heart (in your spirit). You may acquire a certain superficial wisdom, but it does not come from God—it comes from this world's philosophies, from your own sinful nature, even from the devil. For, wherever you find jealousy and rivalry you also find disharmony and other kinds of evil. V. 17: "THE WISDOM THAT COMES FROM GOD IS FIRST UTTERLY PURE, THEN PEACE-LOVING, GENTLE, APPROACHABLE, FULL OF TOLERANT THOUGHTS AND KINDLY ACTIONS, WITH NO BREATH OF FAVORITISM OR HINT OF HYPROCRISY. AND THE WISE ARE PEACE-MAKERS WHO GO ON QUIETLY SOWING FOR A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS—IN OTHER PEOPLE AND IN THEMSELVES." (James 3:13-18)

There is a certain superficial wisdom. It does not come from God. It comes from earthly perspectives—ideas and thoughts of this world, physically or morally, this superficial wisdom comes from our own sinful nature, even from the devil—proceeding from evil spirits. In fact, it is those three working in concert that results in such destruction in this world. One of my wife's team members, on an island south of China, experienced the reality of demonic activity. You can ask Steve about that! Let's see...what is one of this world's

current highest beliefs...their thought-out wisdom? 56+ gender identities? Possibly! Forcing the closure of the Catholic church's confessionals because there is no moral right. Or, maybe David Buckel's thoughts about global warming as he set himself aflame with a gallon of gasoline: "My early death by fossil fuel reflects what we are doing to ourselves." The wisdom of this world.

I Corinthians 1:25 says that the foolishness of God is wiser than man. I picture it this way: If you piled all the philosophical ideas in a stack, from the most foolish to the wisest, when you got to the wisest thought of man, the next thought above that would be the most foolish thought of God, with His wisdom reaching out of sight to the highest sky!

So, verse 17: The wisdom that comes from God... Let's look at the eight characteristics of His wisdom: First of all, it is...

**UTTERLY PURE:** Psa 12:6 tells us that the Words of the Lord are pure words, tried as silver is tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (reflection) So, when the wisdom we speak attempts to reflect the image of our eternal God, His creativity, His character, His Word, we are approaching the pure wisdom of God.

**PEACE-LOVING:** In John 14:27, Jesus tells us that He will leave us with His peace, not the kind the world offers. About the turn of the century from the 1800s to the 1900s, a very wealthy.... To bring it close to home: Out granddaughter, yesterday morning told us that during the night she had a vision. She saw a lion stomping on the head of a snake. Though there was a battle going on, she felt a total peace. That was the peace that Christ gives. This peace is in contrast to verse 18 where it talks about the wise being peace-makers. It is one thing to appreciate the peace that comes to us as we apply the wisdom of God to life situations, it is another thing to see a wrangled messy situation and know how to bring about His peace to that situation. Barnabas got his name changed because the elders in Jerusalem recognized his gifting as a peace-maker. In Acts 9:26, there was a really messy situation: The one who was arresting and seeing Christians killed is now preaching the Good News! Who would believe that? Well, evidently Barnabas did. He went to Saul, heard his story and brought him to the elders and made peace between them.

**GENTLE:** In Philippians 4:5, it translates the same word: Moderation. In I Thessalonians 3:3, patient. We used to know men as gentlemen. A strength of character under control. What happened? As the winds of time were changing, my aunt would say, "I still want my man to open the door for me!"

**APPROACHABLE:** Another translation: "Willing to yield". KJV: "easy to be intreated". To intreat is to ask earnestly for something. Thus, easy to be intreated is to be approachable with an open mind, willing to listen to another

opinion, open for a discussion of the matter. Not assuming a matter before hearing both sides. As Proverbs 18:13 says, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is a folly and shame to him."

**FULL OF TOLERANT THOUGHTS:** Merciful! As I see such a variety of ministries doing the work of the Lord, I am convinced that God is a lot more tolerant than we are! Jesus said, "I will build My Church..." But so many groups are going about it in as many different ways. Which way is the correct way? Another aspect of this: Christians have come to be known for their stoning of their fallen warriors. Three short ministry teams returned in failure. The pastor just said, "Cut 'em lose!"

**KINDLY ACTIONS:** Good fruit. All that James is talking about through this whole Letter—faith-motivated actions. Without getting too political, look what just happened. Trying to shame President Trump into showing his tax returns, many politicians revealed theirs. Only to find a sad commentary on their "kindly actions" in the form of their charitable giving. The report said that the most generous gave 3%; the least giving of those who exposed their tax returns gave 1/10 of one percent! Faith without kindly actions is like a body without a spirit! DEAD! So much more, though, for it takes the wisdom of God to know to whom we devote our kindly actions. I get "friend requests" by the dozens, only to find out that all they really want is money! We do need the wisdom of God in expressing our kindly actions!

**WITHOUT PARTIALITY:** not a breath of favoritism, another translation says. I grew up in a region and a time when we became prejudiced without even knowing it. People of color could not even stay overnight in our town! When I turned 18, I moved to San Diego for a summer job before going to college in the Fall. I was in charge of two floors of a warehouse; another gentleman was in charge of the other two. Our desks were next to each other on the first floor. I had to very quickly "unlearn" things about partiality and favoritism and prejudice that I didn't even know I had learned, including that we bled the same blood! But that is in our sophisticated world. What about in a "primitive" culture: Ticuna. James talks about it in the context of a rich and poor man coming into church. The wisdom that comes from God will not even have a breath of favoritism. Oh, how much easier it is to be nice to those who donate hundreds of dollars to Emmaus Road than the gentleman who cannot even afford to give the five dollars he gives each month.

**WITHOUT HYPOCRISY:** In my office, I have a stack of hats I have worn in different locations. But my masks I hide in the closet! I once played a role in a high school drama. I was Mr Kimber, the groundskeeper on a large run-down estate. You may remember a show of years past where several people all claimed to be one person. Contestants were able to ask each one questions. One was answering truthfully; the others were lying as best they could to make you think they were the real one. Who was the good guy? Dr Jekyll or

Mr Hyde? How many "Neals" are there. May God help us to utilize His wisdom in being the real deal!

This is the wisdom of God. James tells us at the beginning of this passage that humility is the child birthed of true wisdom. "Are there some wise and understanding men among you? Then your lives will be an example of the humility that is born of true wisdom." Unless I am mistaken, we all recognize our short fall in living our life using only God's wisdom. So, let's go back to Chapter One, verse 6 & 7, for James tells us clearly, very directly: "If you come up against any particular issue and don't know how to handle it, (Okay, have we all been there?) you only need to ask of God and He will give you a generous portion of His wisdom without making you feel foolish or guilty." But there is a catch! We must ask sincerely, without any secret doubts about whether we want His wisdom. His way; my way! My way; His way! James says that the person who vacillates is like a wave of the sea, going back and forth. He cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord.

For further study: There is an interesting contrasting parallelism beginning in Proverbs 9:4 & 16: Verse 4 says: "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here. As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him..." And verse 16 says: "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here. As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him..." The exact same words spoken, but by two different persons: The one is Wisdom and the other one is Folly. And as we study through the Proverbs, we see where they live, where they take us, what they each offer us and the end results of accepting their offer.

Ending with this: WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING! THEREFORE, GET WISDOM AND WITH ALL OF YOUR GETTING, GET UNDERSTANDING! Proverbs 4:7

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