

Earthly and Heavenly Wisdom-2
James 3:13-18

1

Introduction

Last week we saw that wisdom is more than simply possessing knowledge. It involves properly and effectively applying truth to life.

We also saw that there are two different types of wisdom. There is the wisdom of this world that is earthy, sensual, and demonic. This wisdom is foolishness from God's perspective.

Today we will look at God's wisdom.

The wisdom we live by is a test of our faith!

2

James 3:13-18

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that his works are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

3

True Wisdom

James 3:17-18

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. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

The “wisdom that is from above” refers to God’s own divine wisdom. He gives this wisdom to those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. These remaining verses of James 3, which focus on God’s divine wisdom are a refreshing contrast to the “false wisdom” of the world.

4

The Motivation of True Wisdom

James 3:17

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.

True wisdom is “pure.” “Pure” carries the idea of being free of contamination or defilement. It was used by the ancient Greeks of a cleansing ceremony whereby a worshiper was made pure and worthy enough to approach the gods. Even the pagans realized that deity should only be approached with a “pure” heart. This Greek word comes from the same root as the word “holy”. Pure wisdom is holy wisdom for it comes from God.

5

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The sixth Beatitude is, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

The apostle John reminds us, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2–3).

6

The Characteristic of True Wisdom

James 3:17

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.

True wisdom is “peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

The connecting adverb of time “then” is the basis for taking “pure” to be a motive for godly wisdom, rather than a characteristic. James gives us a list of seven characteristics of true wisdom.

7

True Wisdom is Peaceful

James 3:17

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.

Matthew 5:9 states, “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.” Those who possess “true wisdom” do not create conflict by their selfishness, but produce peace by their humility (Philippians 2:1-4).

8

True Wisdom is Gentle

James 3:17

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.

The Greek word here is more than gentle, it carries the ideas of “equitable, seemly, fitting, fair, moderate, forbearing, courteous, and considerate”. A gentle person is meek, humbly patient, submits to dishonor and abuse, mistreatment, and persecution, knowing that “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” and “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:5, 10–12).

9

True Wisdom is Willing to Yield

James 3:17

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.

“Willing to yield” means that Godly wisdom is “reasonable”. It is not prideful, nor self-motivated. Therefore, it can yield without disputing. It is teachable, compliant, and not stubborn. The Greek word was used of a man who willingly submitted to military discipline, accepting and complying with whatever was demanded of him and of a person who faithfully observes legal and moral standards. This quality reflects the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

10

True Wisdom is Full of Mercy

James 3:17

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.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). The believer who is full of mercy evidences his saving faith and transformed life not only by forgiving those who have wronged him but by reaching out to help them in whatever ways are needed. Like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), he has concern and compassion for anyone he meets who is suffering or who needs support or assistance. He has special concern for fellow believers, for his brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 3:16–18; 4:7–8, 11).

11

True Wisdom is Full of Good Fruits

James 3:17

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.

“Good fruits” refers to every sort of good work or deed. The truly wise demonstrates his genuine faith by his authentic good works (James 2:14–20). A believer is known for doing good and for exemplifying the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). In all of this, he reflects his “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6).

12

True Wisdom is Without Partiality

James 3:17

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.

This Greek word is used only here in the New Testament. It literally means not to be parted or divided, hence without uncertainty, indecision, inconsistency, vacillation, or doubtfulness. The word indicates impartiality; treating everyone equally without favoritism. James has emphasized this spiritual quality in James 2:1-9. The wise man also knows what he believes. He is standing upon the inerrant revelation of God Himself. Therefore, he is not the “double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

13

True Wisdom is Without Hypocrisy

James 3:17

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.

Jesus condemned hypocrisy more than many other sins. He denounced it four times just in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5). He repeatedly challenged the scribes, Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders for their gross hypocrisy and insincerity. He warned His disciples, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

All of these are the virtues of divine wisdom taught in the Scriptures and produced in believers by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

14

The Results of Wisdom

James 3:18

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

It appears that James creating a picture of fruit being harvested and then, in part, becoming seed, which is resown in peace, and to produces still more fruit, and so on, in the familiar cycle of growing and reaping.

15

The Results of Wisdom

James 3:18

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

There is a relationship between Godly wisdom, genuine righteousness, and peace. Godly wisdom produces a continuing cycle of righteousness, which is planted and harvested in a peaceful, harmonious relationship between God and His faithful people and between those people themselves. As Isaiah declared, “The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17).

16

So What ...

The person who professes to be a Christian must prove it by his works, and his daily living. If he is a true believer, he will possess “true wisdom” from God. That wisdom will manifest itself in righteous, selfless, and peaceful living. The Christian has the revelation of God’s wisdom in Scripture and the teacher and interpreter of God’s wisdom in the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul therefore prayed for the church at Ephesus, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). He later admonished them, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise” (5:15). What does your life reveal to the world as they watch you?