

Earthly and Heavenly Wisdom, Part 3

Scripture: James 3:14-18

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Let's open our Bibles tonight and we are going to study God's Word. I'm excited about what the Lord has for us tonight in James 3. James chapter 3 verses 13 through 18, and we've been trying our best for the last couple of weeks to get into this passage but been dealing with an awful lot of background that's been very, very helpful to us. James chapter 3, let's begin at verse 13, let me read you verses 13 through 18:

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life his works with humility of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above but is earthly, sensual, demoniacal; for where envying and strife are there is confusion in every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace.”

Now this wonderful text is a text about wisdom. It contrasts earthly and heavenly wisdom. Now keep in mind that wisdom is the next test of true saving living faith. James is laying out a series of tests by which a person can verify the genuineness of their faith. And this is the next in that list. He is telling his readers that those who are truly saved, those who genuinely know God, those who possess a living faith have a certain kind of wisdom. In other words, their spiritual conversion is manifest in their wisdom. Wisdom is evidence of what kind of a person you are and I am.

And wisdom, remind yourself, does not mean knowledge. It does not mean information. It means the application of knowledge with divine power to the reshaping of life, transforming attitudes, transforming behavior into righteousness. Wisdom then is not what I know, wisdom is how I live. And so how I live according to the wisdom of God is a barometer on my spiritual condition.

And I pointed out to you in the past that God puts no premium on a wisdom that is cerebral or a wisdom that is creedal. The only premium God has to put on wisdom is the wisdom that transforms the life. Wisdom then in biblical terms equals life style. It equals life style, behavior. True wisdom is knowing God in a life changing relationship, okay? True wisdom is the outworking of a life changing knowledge of God.

Now last time we looked at wisdom from the Old Testament because that's the basis of what James is writing. He doesn't even define it here. He is a Jew writing to Jews so he assumes their Old Testament understanding. And since we can't assume that for ourselves as Gentiles far removed from the Jewish context, we needed to fill up a little bit of our understanding. Remember that the wisdom of the Old Testament was basically initiated by the fear of the Lord. Do you remember that? The fear of the Lord is the...what?...beginning of wisdom. Wisdom begins in fearing the Lord. We showed you out of Scripture that fearing the Lord equals saving faith. You remember that? To fear the Lord is to have a reverential trust in Him. When the Old Testament says "fear God, fear the Lord," it is a call to salvation, it is a call to reverential trust, to commitment in which a person turns from sin in faith to God and has a hatred of evil and a love of obedience. And we went through all of that in great detail a couple of weeks ago.

So, wisdom began at the point when one was ushered into a relationship with God through reverential faith and trust...called in the Old Testament the fear of the Lord. You remember that Cornelius because he was a believing Gentile was called a "God...what?...fearer," because that was the essence of saving faith. So once a person put their faith in God, then that introduced them into a life of wisdom. The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord was to turn from iniquity. The fear of the Lord was to hate evil and love righteousness. The fear of the Lord was to do God's commandments. And that all is a part of a saving work.

So, when a person put his faith in God, he was ushered into the sphere of wisdom. And then became the really the student of divine wisdom who lived that wisdom out. True wisdom, we saw, comes from God. It is given to one who comes into relationship with Him. And all of us who know God in a personal intimate way have received from Him that wisdom. Now let me say that again. All of us who know God through Christ in a personal way have received the wisdom of God. And that wisdom of God is manifest in the life of a true believer. Every true believer will manifest the wisdom of God.

Now let me say something at this point. We will manifest the wisdom of God and we should manifest more of the wisdom of God. A true Christian will love the Lord Jesus Christ and should more love the Lord Jesus Christ. A true Christian will serve God and should more and more serve God, right? A true Christian will obey and should more and more obey. So when we say that having become believers we have received the wisdom of God, that does not mean we have received and are applying all the wisdom that is possible to have. Okay? It is truly a mark of a believer to manifest the wisdom of God, but none of us manifest the wisdom of God to the fullest possible capacity. And so when we say this is the mark of a believer, we can also say it is an encouraging and exhorting text to increase our commitment to that wisdom at the same time.

Now let me go to the New Testament with you for just a moment. The New Testament also ties wisdom to the act of believing. For example, go back to Matthew chapter 7...Matthew chapter 7 and

verse 26 which is a very familiar text to anyone who has studied the gospels, you remember there are people who hear the Word of God and that's all. And then there are people who do the Word of God and they are the true believers, not the ones who hear and not the ones that say but the ones that do. And then He gives an illustration of that in verse 24, "Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him unto a...what kind of man--what kind?...wise man who built his house upon a rock, the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew beat on the house, fell not. It was founded upon a rock. These sayings of Mine are also heard by people who do not do them and they are likened unto...what kind of a man?...a foolish man who built his house on the sand, the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew beat on the house, it fell and great was the fall of it." Now here you have the unregenerate man who is very religious. He's got all the religious superstructure but no foundation and he is a fool. On the other hand, you have a truly converted man who does the Word of God and he is a man who is...what?...wise. Wisdom then in the words of our Lord right here is equated with true salvation. It is equated with saving working faith.

Matthew chapter 24...Matthew chapter 24 verse 42, "Watch therefore for you know not what hour your Lord does come, but know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would have not allowed his house to be broken into." Our Lord is speaking, "Therefore be also ready for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man is coming. Who then is a faithful and...what?...wise servant whom his Lord has made ruler over his household to give them food in due season?" In other words, who is the exalted and wise servant? Who is this? "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Verily I say to you that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and begin to smite his fellow servants and eat and drink with drunkards, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him and in an hour that he's not aware of and cut him in half and appoint his portion with the hypocrites and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The unregenerate fool and the man who is ready for the Lord's coming and he was what kind of man? A wise man. Wisdom again is equated with salvation. The false believer is unfaithful and unwise. The true believer is faithful and wise.

Chapter 25, again in the Olivet Discourse, our Lord speaking of His Second Coming tells a parable about the Kingdom of heaven being like ten virgins who took their lamps and the lamps, by the way, represent Christian profession. Those are the symbols of Christianity in the parable. And they went out to meet the bridegroom. They wanted to meet Christ when He came. They had all their symbols of their Christian faith. But five of them were...what?...wise and five of them were foolish. The foolish ones took their lamps, they had a profession but they had no...what?...no oil, that means no reality. There was nothing on the inside. There was only something on the outside. There was a profession without reality. Verse 4, "The wise took oil and their vessels with their lamps and while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. At midnight there was a cry made. Behold the bridegroom is coming. Go out to meet Him. Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, that is they adjusted the wick so that it would function, and the foolish said to the wise, Give us your oil, but salvation

cannot be transported from one human being to another. And that couldn't be done. The wise answered and said, Not so lest there be not enough for us and you. Go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves." It was too late for that obviously. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. They were ready, went in with Him to the marriage. The door was shut. Afterward came the other virgins saying, just like in Matthew 7, "Lord, Lord, open to us. He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes." You don't want to be a fool with a religious profession without reality, you want to be wise, professing Christianity that has reality. So, again, wisdom is equated with true saving faith.

First Corinthians, please, and chapter 1, verse 23 and again we find this same kind of equation being made. Verse 23, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them who are called--that is called to salvation and every call in the epistles is an efficacious saving call, so those that are saved both Jews and Greeks--Christ is the power of God and the...what?...the wisdom of God." And listen to that. When you receive Christ, He became to you the wisdom of God. So again wisdom is equated with saving faith.

Verse 30, "But of him are you in Christ Jesus who from God is made unto us wisdom." When you receive Christ, you receive wisdom. In Him, Colossians 2 says, dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, right? And you are complete in Him. So when you receive Christ, you receive wisdom. Those who put saving faith in God are those who are wise. When you fear the Lord, you begin the path of wisdom.

In 2 Timothy, one more passage, I call your attention to chapter 3 verse 15, "From a child," Paul says to Timothy, "you have known the holy Scriptures..." Do you know the rest of the verse? "Which are able to make you...what?...wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Faith which is in Christ Jesus makes you...what?...wise. So true wisdom then is an identifying mark of a saved person. And that is precisely what James is proposing. He is saying here you can know a person's spiritual status by their wisdom. What kind of wisdom do they manifest? What kind of wisdom do they demonstrate? And he compares verses 14 to 16, false wisdom with verses 17 and 18, true wisdom.

Now let's look at verse 13 and refresh ourselves very briefly. James asks the question: who is a wise man? There were no doubt people parading around claiming to be wise. And who is a man endued with knowledge among you? Who is in the know and who has true wisdom? Then he says this, "Let him show it." And he pinpoints three areas. First, out of his good life, that means his general conduct. If he is a truly wise man endued with true divine and spiritual knowledge, if he is really redeemed, he will show it in his general conduct. In other words, if you know him over a period of time and see him in the trials and tribulations and exigencies of life, you will see by his conduct the wisdom of God.

Secondly, not only in his general conduct, let him show it out of a good life but also his works. That means specific deeds. Not only will it be generally made manifest but specifically in a given deed that

wisdom of God will be seen. And then finally in an attitude of humility...an attitude of meekness. So the wisdom of God if claimed should be demonstrated in conduct, specific acts, and attitude...and attitude. And every person reading this passage and hearing this message needs to do a little self-examination. Wisdom is manifesting the power and the word of God in every area of life. So who is wise? The one who proves it by his general conduct, his specific deeds and his attitude of humility.

Now James brings us to the text. First of all, let's look at false wisdom, verses 14 to 16. He begins by analyzing the worldly wisdom that is not of God. It has no relationship to God. It has no obedience to God. It has no knowledge of God's truth. He goes under the surface of this worldly wisdom to tell us several things about it.

First of all, the motivation for false wisdom, verse 14, follow this, "But if you have bitter envying and strife--as the Authorized says--in your hearts, do not glory and do not lie against the truth." Now here we're introduced to the motivation for false wisdom. If you're keeping a little outline, Roman numeral I is false wisdom. "A" under that is the motivation for false wisdom. The issue here is motive because there's a little phrase in verse 14, three words, "in your...what?...hearts....in your hearts." That's the place of motive. As Proverbs 3...Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with diligence for out of it are the issues of life." So he's looking into the heart and as he looks into the heart, he sees what motivates the person. And there are two things that motivate. One is bitter jealousy and two is selfish ambition. We'll look at those just briefly.

What are the motives behind human wisdom? Number one, in the Authorized it says "bitter envying," a better translation would be "bitter jealousy." So James writes, "But if you have bitter jealousy," the word "bitter" means exactly that. *Pikron* in the Greek means harsh or bitter. It is used of bitter undrinkable water. The word "envying" or the word "jealousy" is *zelos*. It is used here in a bad sense and it means an evil jealousy. It is the idea of a harsh bitter self-centeredness that produces basically a resentful attitude toward everybody else.

In other words, it's a "me" kind of world that these people live in. People who possess false wisdom have their own world. It is a self-formed world. It is a self-focused world. And it is a bitterly jealous attitude they convey toward anyone else who threatens that little world. They are resentful of anyone who threatens their territory, who threatens their accomplishments, who threatens their reputation, who threatens to crowd their little slice of this world. Human wisdom then is self-focused and any self-focused person has a tremendous problem with bitter jealousy. Some handle it better than others, but all self-focused worldly wisdom type people struggle with this. Anyone who differs with me is an implacable enemy. Anyone who differs with me is a foe. Anyone who differs with me is wrong. And anyone who differs with me and is successful, I am jealous of, I am bitter against.

And then there's the word "strife" in the Authorized. It's actually selfish ambition, *eritheian*(?), it means a personal ambition that creates rivalry or a party spirit or antagonism. It's again selfishness. It's just

another way of pointing to self. First you start with bitter jealousy and that creates the attitude of competition and conflict. And selfish ambition generates a party spirit and a bitterness toward others. The term, interestingly enough, this word "selfish ambition" really once meant spinning for hire. It was used of ladies who made thread. And it was used of these sewing women. It eventually came to mean any work done for pay. And then it came to mean anything anybody did for what they could personally get out of it. It's...it entered politics and it became used with people who in selfish ambition tried to seek high political office, attaining their person goals at any cost no matter what they had to do to other people to get there.

To put it simply, James says, the wisdom that is not of God is selfish, it is self-centered, it is consumed with ego fulfillment. It has as its goal personal gratification at any cost. It is the goal of humanistic thinking. It is the goal of humanistic sociology and psychology. It is the goal of all materialistic human endeavor, personal fulfillment no matter what is typical of an unregenerate unredeemed heart. There's no selflessness, there's no humility, there's no humble love for someone else. And to put it in the terms of 1 John, there's no love for one another. Proud, selfish, self-focused, self-centered motives for all of life, people working for their personal gain, their personal fulfillment, their personal aggrandizement are manifesting the false wisdom of the world that is not of God and they show the absence of divine wisdom, thus the absence of a relationship to God. James says if you have such a proud loveless self-centered motive for life, notice verse 14, stop arrogantly boasting. That's what "glory not" means. Stop arrogantly boasting. What are they boasting about? They're boasting that they have...what?...the wisdom of...whom?...of God. And he's saying if you're running around boasting that you have the wisdom of God but the character of your life is proud, loveless, self-centeredness, stop arrogantly boasting. Stop that. Stop claiming to possess a wisdom which you're not living because, he says at the end of verse 14, you are lying against what is obviously the truth.

In other words, go back to verse 13. James says you say you have wisdom, show it. If I look at your life and I see you motivated totally by self-centeredness, selfishness, pride, ego- fulfillment, then for goodness sake stop your arrogant boast about having the wisdom of God, the fact is you're lying against what is obviously true. Stop claiming to have what you don't have. The truth, that little phrase, no doubt, has reference to the gospel...the truth, the saving gospel. Back in verse 18 of chapter 1, "Of His own will begot He us with the Word of truth." The Word of truth. Chapter 5 verse 19, "If anyone err from the truth and one convert him," links the truth again with the gospel. So he is saying you may be running around claiming to have the wisdom of God, but if your life is motivated by your own selfish ambition, your own selfish desires and you are motivated by bitter envying and jealousy, then whatever may be your claim, you better stop making such an arrogant boast because your lying in the face of the gospel. No pretentious claims to the possession of divine wisdom are convincing when they come out of a heart that is totally motivated by jealousy and selfish ambition. An evil motivated arrogant selfish self-promoting jealous person is lying in the face of the truth when they claim to have the wisdom of God.

So, he says don't be a living lie. Own up. And he really calls for an inventory of our hearts, doesn't he? He's saying take a look at yourself. What motivates you? What motivates you? Look at your heart. Are you motivated by that which is God honoring? Are you motivated by a love for others? Are you motivated by humility? Are you motivated by unselfishness? Or are you on a massive ego trip to fulfill all your own desires? There is no single characteristic of unredeemed man more obvious than that he is totally dominated by..what is it?..pride and self. That's the nature of it. And there is nothing more characteristically evident of a redeemed person than that he is no longer totally dominated by self.

So, the motive then we see in verse 14. What about the characteristics of false wisdom? Let's go to the second under the false wisdom, first was the motive, now the characteristics. What is false wisdom like? Verse 15, this wisdom, this wisdom that doesn't come from heaven, this wisdom that is not from God, he says, "This wisdom descends not from above." What wisdom? The wisdom that is bitter, the wisdom that is jealous, the wisdom that is selfishly ambitious, the wisdom that is self-centered, self-focused, the wisdom without humility, the wisdom without love, the wisdom that doesn't care about other people, just consumes on its own desire...that wisdom is not from above.

What do we mean by wisdom again? Life style...that kind of thinking, that kind of acting, that kind of conduct, that kind of attitude constitutes the wisdom that descends not from above. What does that mean? It doesn't come from whom? God. It doesn't qualify to be called divine. True wisdom comes from God. We have, by the way, surveyed enough Scripture to cover that, but I remind you of James chapter 1 verse 5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask...whom?...God. He's the one that gives it to all men liberally and holds back nothing. And if you ask, it will be given you." God is the source of wisdom. Verse 17, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, comes down from the father of lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." So God is the source of wisdom. He gives it to those who ask as He gives all good gifts. Worldly wisdom, the wisdom of men, as Paul calls it in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, is not from God. It's not from God. It is self-centered and self-focused.

Now he gives us three words to describe the wisdom that is false. One, it is earthly. Two, it is sensual, or fleshy. Three, it is demoniacal. Those are very interesting, those three. Have you ever read in the Scripture or in some book that the believer has three enemies? What are the three enemies of the believer? The world, the flesh and the devil. You notice the parallel here? The wisdom that does not come from above is first of all...what?...earthly, that's the world; secondly, sensual, that's the flesh; thirdly, demoniacal, that's the devil. This is a characterization of human wisdom apart from God.

First of all, what do we mean by earthly? That word means just that. As to its extent, it is limited to the sphere of time and space. It cannot crawl out of its locked prison. Man is in this little box and that box is a box of time and space. Outside is God and all of eternal truth, man cannot get out of his little box,

he bangs around in his little box from side to side and top to bottom, he cannot get out. He conceives without spiritual illumination. He never rises above the level of the material world. He is in a closed system, locked up. And everything that he comes to conclude is a part of his own self-styled system. He is earthbound. And so, all of his wisdom has the mark of the curse of his own fallenness and the curse of his fallenness is primarily his pride and self-centeredness. So everything the world spews out and everything it spawns is more and more self-centeredness. Have you noticed that? Do your own thing...have it your way...even Burger King is into the mode of the moment, but that's the spirit of typically unredeemed humanity...fulfill your own needs, fulfill your own desires, do what you want, don't let anybody invade your square inch. The finite system of unregenerate men who know not God is demanding an earthly wisdom and nothing more. Everything is limited to the corruption of man's system. It pervades his philosophy, it pervades his education, it pervades every dimension of his life.

Secondly, he says it is sensual. That is psuchike(?), it means it's fleshy. It pertains to the life of man, pertaining to his flesh, his humanness, his frailty. Whatever belongs to the life of the natural world, that's what psuchike has to do with. In fact, it says in 1 Corinthians 2:14 the psuchikos man, the natural man understandeth not...what?...the things of God. He is sensual. All of his feelings, impulses, appetites are again in a closed fallen corrupted system locked up. From man's unsanctified heart, from his unredeemed spirit he spawns all of his human wisdom. And whether it's sociology, psychology, philosophy, education or whatever it is, he comprehends man, he comprehends man's problems, he comprehends man's solutions from a purely humanistic fleshy sensual perspective.

That's the wisdom of the world. It is earthbound. It is limited to the sphere of time and space and the fallenness of a corrupt humanity. Secondly, at best it is reflection of his humanness, his fleshiness, his sensual character. That is, it rises not above his bodily impulses.

Thirdly, it is demoniacal. That is the adjective really from the term "demon." It is the only place in the whole New Testament where it appears in an adjective form. And it means demoniacal. And that is to say that human wisdom, though it is all that man can spawn out of his own mind and is locked into his own earthly existence, is really generated by what source? Demons who have been made captive to the same kind of evil system of which men also is a captive. It's just what Paul said in writing to Timothy when he said that false teachers are really teaching doctrines of demons generated by seducing spirits.

So earthly wisdom, now mark this, earthly wisdom is spawned by demons, it is reflective of sensual feeling and it goes no further than the fallenness of mankind. That is earthbound sensual demonic wisdom. And that's the way most people live. But Satan calls it wisdom. Hey, when Eve was in the garden in chapter 3 verse 6, she looked on the fruit because she heard that the tree was able to make one wise. That was a lie. Satan always promises wisdom. And he always promises that you will know and be in the know and understand and be erudite and be educated. But the wisdom of the world proceeds from evil spirits. It proceeds from fallen angels. It proceeds from demons. It proceeds

from Satan and his agents who are disguised as ministers of light when in fact they are ministers of darkness. The thing that makes human wickedness so devastating is that man is smart and man is wicked and the combination is deadly. Demonic natural earthbound wisdom, mark it, never touches God. It never touches God. It leads man into smugness, it leads man into self-content, it leads man into immorality, it leads him into arrogance, it leads him into self-sufficiency, it leads him into total abandonment to his natural impulses.

And the only thing, beloved, believe me, that restrains the world at all from an absolutely animalistic existence is that God in His grace has salted the earth with divine wisdom that acts as a restrainer. And He has put here the living restrainer, the Holy Spirit. But when the Spirit of God's restraining work ceases and when the salt, the people of God, are taken out in the Rapture, all hell literally breaks loose for seven years because evil is no longer restrained and the earth is no longer salted and there is immorality and evil to the fullest extent that man would purvey it if indeed he were not somehow restrained. It becomes a malignant infection that spreads its killing influence everywhere.

And you look at our world and don't you worry sometimes? I know I do and I say, "Why...how can it just keep getting worse and worse?" Sometimes I get frustrated, how can we stop this, how can we put an end to this? Why does it have to go this way? And I remind myself it can't go any other way because we have a whole civilization of people who are locked up with human wisdom. They don't have any answers. They don't have any answers. That's why the educational system in terms of its ability to evaluate man and solve his problems is an absolute farce because all it is is demonic wisdom touching base with the feelings of man who are locked hopelessly in their corruption. It offers no answers. That's human wisdom. And that's the wisdom that characterizes the world.

So, James says, "Look, if you're going around saying you have the wisdom of God, but you're motivated by pride and the reflection of your wisdom is that which is characteristic of the world having been defined as demonic as to its source, fleshly as to its drives and earthbound as to its extent, then whatever your claim, we don't buy it. If you're driven by the wisdom of the world, whatever your claim might be it doesn't fly."

Thirdly, he talks about the results of false wisdom in verse 16. What are the results? What comes out of this? Verse 16 says, "For where envying and personal ambition are..." and he repeats the two motives from verse 14, same two terms, "For where these things are as motives, bitter jealousy and personal ambition, where these two kinds of evil motives produce earthly, sensual, demonic wisdom, the result is that there is confusion and every...what?...evil work."

Confusion...the word is a most fascinating word, akatastasia, it means disorder coming out of instability, chaos, confusion, disorder. The same word is used in chapter 1 verse 8, the impact of doublemindedness. Chapter 3 verse 8, the impact of an uncontrolled tongue, the same kind of chaos, confusion, disorder. Listen, earthly wisdom will never produce harmony, it will never produce love

because earthly wisdom is, first of all, proud, self-seeking, self-serving, self-indulgent, it destroys intimacy, it destroys love, it destroys unity, it destroys fellowship, it brings discord, it brings chaos. Are you seeing it happen all around our world? Anger, bitterness, law suits, divorces, people unable to get along with people, that's the result, that's the legacy of earthly wisdom. Confusion, chaos, destruction, devastation, division, no ability to love, no intimacy, no true sharing, no real fellowship, no harmony, no peace and our world is going to get worse and worse and worse as men keep moving toward the inexorable day when Jesus Christ invades this world.

So, the results of false wisdom, first of all, confusion, chaos, disruption of all order. Secondly, every evil work. Now you can't get more general than that, folks. You say, "What does that mean?" It means just that. At best the word phaulos means worthless, at worst it means vile. Every worthless and vile thing. It contemplates evil... I might say R.C. Trench has a good word on this...it contemplates evil not from the aspect of its active or passive malignity but rather from its good for nothingness the utter impossibility of any true gain ever coming from it. Did you get that? So out of human wisdom comes disorder, chaos, confusion and absolutely no good at all. Pretty straight stuff, folks. Absolutely no good at all.

The word "thing" you see there, every evil thing, or every evil work, the word there is pragma, pragmatic. It produces absolutely nothing pragmatically of any value at all. At its best it produces worthless things. At its worst it produces vile things. Certainly can't be of God.

So James says who's wise? Let's see it. Show it. When a person claims true wisdom from God, when a person claims true faith, when a person claims to know the Lord Jesus Christ, when a person claims salvation but his heart is filled with evil motives centered around selfish pride and his approach to life is earthly and sensual and demonic and the product of his life is chaos and discord and disorder and confusion and nothing of value and plenty of evil, that is not the wisdom of God. He lies against what is obviously the truth. So, false wisdom.

Let's look at true wisdom. It's just a brief look in verses 17 and 18. It flies by fast. Let's start with the motivation for true wisdom. Verse 17, "But the wisdom that is from above-- that is, comes down from God--the true and divine wisdom is first--and that sets it apart--first of all, it is pure." And I believe that's a reference to its motive. It is first pure. The word there implies sincere moral spiritual character. It's not hagios, the normal word for something pure, it's hagnos(?) and it has more to do with the spiritual integrity moral sincerity-- free from bitter jealousy, free from selfish ambition, free from arrogant self-promotion. By the way, it's used of Jesus Christ in 1 John 3:3 because He is pure as the pattern of all purity. So, first of all, as to motive, the wisdom of God is pure.

You show me a believer and I'll show you a person whose heart has pure desires. The deepest part of that believer wants to do God's will, wants to serve God, wants to love God. Paul in Romans 7 says even when I sin, I'm doing what I don't want to do, right? I'm doing what I don't want to do. And the

Psalms 51:7 cries out, "O God, purge me with hyssop and I will be clean, wash me and I will be whiter than snow." The true believer hates his sin and rising out of his inmost being is a longing for what is clear and clean and pure and holy and good and honest...a shrinking from contamination. He wants clean hands and a pure heart.

By the way, that's a condition of a true believer as indicated in the Beatitudes. Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." And the word "see" means to understand. It is the pure hearted who really understand God. That is to say to understand God is true wisdom and those who have true wisdom are those who have a pure heart. So, James, I know in this epistle and I've said it to you several times, is building on a very great familiarity with the Sermon on the Mount.

The root idea of this word, *hagnae*(?) is the idea of being pure enough in your heart to approach the gods. It was a secular word and people needed to be that pure to approach their deities. Eventually it came to refer...it started out meaning a ceremonial cleansing where you washed your body, it eventually came to refer to a moral purity which allowed you to approach your God. For example, on the Temple of Escalapius(?) at Epidaurus is this inscription that archaeologists found, it says, "He who would enter the divine temple must be hagnos, purity is to have a mind which thinks holy thoughts." So even the pagans understood that there was to be in approaching the deities a pure heart. Hebrews 12:14 puts it this way, "Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

So the basic pure heartedness is the motive of the believer. It's not a heart of pride, it's a heart of purity. I really believe that when it says in Ezekiel that salvation is when God takes away your stony heart and gives you a new heart that that new heart rather than being consumed with self is consumed with purity. You say, "Well why do I still sin?" Because your new heart is incarcerated in your old flesh. But your heart fights against your flesh and that's why Paul says in my inner man I delight in the law of God and in my inner man I want to please God and it's this ridiculous flesh that keeps messing up the desires of my inner man. But there's a pure heartedness in a true believer.

What are the characteristics of true wisdom then? The motive, purity. What's the characteristics? We don't need to spend much time on this. Notice in verse 17 the word "then," and the word *epita*(?) in the next place seems to set the word "pure" apart from the rest of the list which again makes me think that he's drawing that as a motive rather than simply a characteristic of true wisdom. So having given the motive as a purity, he then says in the next place, or after that, or moving on from motive to outward behavior, here are the qualities that will be characteristic of true wisdom. Compared to the last kind of wisdom which was earthly, sensual, demoniacal, this kind of wisdom, number one, is peaceable...*eirenikos*, peace loving, peace promoting. What do the Beatitudes say? "Blessed are the peacemakers...blessed are the peacemakers," in Matthew chapter 5 verse 9, again they are the ones who are characteristically called the sons of God...peacemakers.

The wisdom from God is not creating confusion. It is not creating disorder. It is not self-promoting. It is peace loving, peace making. It doesn't come to an unholy truce, that is a compromise with truth, but it makes peace.

Secondly, he says the wisdom from above is gentle. That is a beautiful word that is frankly untranslatable. One writer called it sweet reasonableness. It's a very difficult word to translate. William Barclay says it's the most difficult Greek word of all to translate into the English language. It is the lovely attribute of redeemed character and godly wisdom that is humbly patient, that is steadfastly gentle, that submits to dishonor, disgrace, mistreatment, persecution with an attitude of humility, an attitude of courteousness, an attitude of kindness, an attitude of patience, an attitude of consideration without hatred, without malice, without revenge. Blessed...say the Beatitudes...are you when you are persecuted, when you are reviled, when men say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the ones who are persecuted for righteousness sake are the ones who inherit the Kingdom. And so again, James is saying what Jesus said, Kingdom citizens typically are this kind of person. They are peaceable and they are gentle. They are the kind of people who know no revenge. They take persecution, they take mistreatment with kindness.

Thirdly he says this wisdom is easy to be entreated. *Eupeithes* means they're willing to yield, willing to yield, not stubborn, easily persuaded, teachable, compliant. The opposite would be stubborn, obstinate, disobedient. It's used of a person who submits to military discipline willingly. It's used of a person who observes legal and moral standards in life and willingly submits. And again, it's very reflective of a Beatitude attitude in chapter 5 again of Matthew, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Those who are humble, broken over their sin, mourning over their sin, meek because of their sin, they are the compliant ones, they are the easily persuaded ones, the teachable ones, the yielding ones. That's the spirit.

Fourthly, he says one who is characterized by the true wisdom, the wisdom of God is full of mercy...full of mercy. This really means a concern for people who suffer manifested not only in forgiving people who have wronged you but in reaching out to people with compassion who are in suffering. And when people are characterized as merciful, demonstrating kindness and compassion, again they demonstrate a Beatitude attitude, Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall...what?...obtain mercy." And again James is intersecting in every one of these with a Beatitude. "Blessed are those who are full of mercy," that's the wisdom of God. That's evidence of saving faith. That's evidence of a transformed life, a concern for others, a compassion for others, a desire to give to meet the needs of others. It's what John said again in 1 John, it's the love of others. It's seeing your brother have need and not closing up your compassion to him. If you do that, how dwells the love of God in you, John says, and he's saying the same thing James is saying.

And then full of good fruits. Verse 17, full of good fruits, and that simply means all good works, a wide variety of spiritual deeds. It's very much like the Beatitude, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness..." This is the person whose life is demonstrated in good deeds, the works that are produced by faith as he talked about in chapter 2 verses 14 to 20...the wide variety of spiritual deeds, the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of righteousness that Philippians 1:11 talks about.

So the wisdom from God is a marvelous and beautiful and unique thing. It is peaceable, like the peacemakers in the Beatitudes. It is gentle in the sense of sweet reasonableness and no revenge. It takes persecution and mistreatment without retaliation. It is easily entreated, willing to yield, teachable, easily persuaded and compliant as those in the Beatitudes who are meek and who inherit the earth. It is full of mercy, that is compassion to people in need. And rather than seeking its own, it seeks the things of others. It is full of good fruits, that is it manifests what is good and noble and righteous before God, as those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

And then he says it is without partiality in verse 17...it is without partiality. That's the only place in the New Testament this term is used. It means it's unwavering, it's undivided in its commitment. A wonderful thought. There's no vacillating. There's no shifting. There's no turning one way and then turning another way. It's consistent, no partiality.

You remember in the last chapter James talked about partiality, didn't he, in chapter 2? Favoritism toward the rich and against the poor. But this is the person who never wavers, never vacillates, this is the true hearted wholehearted absolutely sincere person who moves out in faithfulness to God. To take it back to the Sermon on the Mount, this is the person who lets the light shine consistently before men who in seeing their good works can glorify their Father in heaven. Unwavering commitment without partiality, never making distinctions in persons and never wavering in commitment.

And then finally, number seven, without hypocrisy...without hypocrisy. Utterly sincere, genuine, not phony, not fake, no pretense, no mask, and no hypocrisy. That's the climax of true wisdom. You want to know who a truly wise person is? It's a person who manifests this kind of living style, this kind of behavior.

And since...note this...Christ is our wisdom and since Christ is the embodiment of all those characteristics, when Christ takes His residence up in your life, those characteristics become yours and mine. As Christ lives His life through me, these characteristics come through me as well. So, when a person claims true wisdom and has pure motives and behavior that reveals a love for making peace, a humble, patient, non-retaliatory spirit, a sweet reasonableness, a willingness to yield in obedience, a habit of merciful compassionate acts toward others, a variety of righteous deeds that minister spiritual good and benefit to others, an undivided commitment to God's truth without partiality toward anyone, and all of this is sincere and genuine, James says that person shows that they have the true wisdom...the true wisdom.

You say, "Now, John, I don't know. I look at my own life and I wonder." Look, the point is not that you have all of that that you ought to have, the point is that you have some of that and enough of that to show the life of God within you. You never have as much as you ought to have, right? But if you don't see it at all, then the evidence isn't there.

And what does it produce, the last point, what are the results of true wisdom? Verse 18, "And the fruit of righteousness..." By the way, true wisdom here is equated with what? With what? Righteousness. The fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is equated with true wisdom because wisdom is righteous living. "And the fruit of this righteousness is sown..." Now that's a strange picture...fruit is sown. Usually seed is sown. But on the other hand, fruit harvested becomes seed for the next crop, doesn't it? Isn't it interesting what he's saying here? The fruit of righteousness is resown in peace by them that are making peace. This is the exorable law of sowing and reaping. Where you have true wisdom, equal true righteousness, that true righteousness that is being worked out is fruit. But that true righteousness which is fruit becomes seed and generates more true righteousness. Do you see that? It's the law of sowing and reaping. In a present tense form it reads, "And the fruit of righteousness is being sown in peace by them that make peace." As you sow the fruit of righteousness, it produces more righteousness. The ongoing process, the continual cycle of righteous fruit, one righteous act harvested from the field of true wisdom becomes the seed to grow another one. And all of this is done in peace, that's the harmonious relationship between man and God and man and man by the ones making peace. They do it, they receive the benefit from it.

And that last phrase "by the ones making peace" is a little bit vague admittedly. But the best we can say about it is that righteousness flourishes in a climate of peace in the hands of peacemakers. And the bottom line with peacemakers is they are not concerned with...what?...self.

So, James follows a clear line of thought. If one professes to be a Christian, he must prove it by living like a Christian. And nothing is more convincing than the kind of wisdom revealed in his or her behavior. God's wisdom will be revealed in the way we live. And when we hear Him and we love Him and we obey Him and we serve Him, it will be manifest by a purified heart in humble peacemaking deeds of righteousness that reproduce themselves. It's a tremendous, tremendous picture. And James says that's how a person proves whether or not he has the wisdom of God.

You ask yourself: do I? Do I have the wisdom of God? The answer is not anything other than what is the character of your life, what are the specific deeds you do and what is your attitude. And you run the inventory yourself. Is your life worldly wisdom? Or is your life divine wisdom?

You say, "I don't know. Maybe I'm in the middle." Well, you better get on your knees and find out which side of the line you're on. It may be that you're in the worldly wisdom area but you've been around Christians so long you've picked up some of their habits. It may be that you are in the godly

wisdom area but you've been hanging around the world so long you've picked up some of their habits. And if you're having trouble figuring out where you are, you're in desperate situation. God's wisdom should mark without equivocation those people who belong to Jesus Christ.

And let me just summarize in closing thought...wisdom equals life style. The entry into wisdom is through faith in God through Jesus Christ. We are saved into wisdom. Once we come into wisdom, then Scripture becomes the source of wisdom, the Holy Spirit becomes the teacher of wisdom. What a wonderful thought. What a wonderful truth. And if we lack any wisdom, we can...what?...ask of God. So we have entered the sphere of wisdom. We possess the revelation of wisdom. We are indwelt by the teacher of wisdom. And whatever application of wisdom we lack, we may ask God who gives and holds back nothing. And so says Paul in Ephesians 5 and verse 15 these practical words, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not like fools but like wise." If you are in the wisdom of God, Paul is saying you ought to act like it. Let's bow in prayer.

This has been a rich and rewarding study, Father, for us. We thank You so much. The clarity of Your Word, the straightforwardness with which it comes to our hearts in the energy of the Holy Spirit is so life changing. We bless You for that. What a wonderful day we've had and a blessed evening. We thank You so much for our rich and sweet fellowship, for the songs we enjoy. We thank You even for what awaits us as we share together after the service is over. We thank You most of all that You've met us here in Your Word and again You've spoken to our hearts. Thank You that You've taken those of us who are so sinful and so unworthy and the base things of the world and the no ones of the world and You've made us wise. Wise unto salvation...wise unto godliness...we thank You. And help us, Lord, to be as wise as we can be, to fill up all the potential of divine wisdom granted us in Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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