

"Wisdom from Above, I"

James 3:11-18, I

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"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 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." (Jas 3:11-18 AV)

There is nothing more irritating than the censures of a fool. We have all experienced such rebukes, and they have uniformly upset and irritated us. I saw a sign in a plumber's shop one time that said something like this: "Hourly charge: \$30. If you give advice: \$50." Too often, though, we have responded in kind, and made the matter worse. We must remember that a soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up trouble. We must think, "What will I accomplish by what I am about to say?" Do I desire to vindicate myself; put this person down; enhance my reputation; indulge my ill-will; hurt this person; or help this person or those standing around, and vindicate the love and truth of God.

This great book of James exhorts us to seek heavenly wisdom when we have tribulations and temptations. He also contrasts what people know naturally [the wisdom from below] with the wisdom from God [the wisdom from above]. He describes both and shows the results of both.

I. The marks of Heavenly wisdom:

A. Good conversation: Our English word comes from the Latin: "to live: conduct, behavior." The Greek word means "a way of life,"

1. One of the reasons for tribulation is to bring our lives to good conduct, as we read in Hebrews 12:5-14:

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father

chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" (Heb 12:5-14 AV)

2. We should seek order and control of our lives. To live by the rule of good behavior.

3. This we do not define for himself, but we searches the Scripture to bring ourselves into conformity with what God has said. This is a life-time project.

B. Meekness of wisdom:

1. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. This is the wisdom from above; and not the earthly wisdom that dominates the tongue of the unbeliever and which we spoke of last week. James 3:14-16

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

2. The more right knowledge you have, the more you are aware of what you do not know. "Knowledge puffeth up."

3. Or: it can mean "boasting of a gift you do not have." Pretending knowledge, pretending holiness, pretending some gift of the spirit. Or like Ananias and Sapphira: pretending a dedication to God that you do not have.

II. When do we especially need this wisdom from above. Simple answer: all the time: every moment of our lives. Col 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

A. In times of difficulty: of testings and trials.

1. In dealing with difficult people Psalm 3:

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.² Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. ³ But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. ⁴ I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

2. In times when you have made mistakes and need to extricate yourself from a difficult situation: Ps. 130

¹ Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. ² Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. ³ If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

3. When you need strength to endure: Ps 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, [and] strengthenedst me [with] strength in my soul.

4. When you feel all alone: Ps. 142 ⁴ I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. ⁵ I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

B. When you read your Bible.

1. Pray that the veil will be taken off your eyes:

2Co 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

2. Ps 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

III. In knowing the will of God in murky decisions. Like the disciples: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

A. ²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: ²¹ And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

B. But how do we hear this voice? The following should be helpful.

1. Trust in the Lord completely: Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

2. Determine to do the will of God: Pr 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. May this become the habitual thought of your heart!!

3. Pray for wisdom: "If any man lack wisdom...."

4. Rest in the Lord: and wait!!

a) Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

b) Ps 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

"Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1Th 3:11-13 AV)

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.