

## Message #11

## James 3:13-18

This church is a very rare church and I think I am in somewhat of a position to say this because I have pastored three churches and prior to that I spoke in many different churches. One of the things that makes this a rare church is we don't have anyone in leadership who wants dominating power. Many years ago, there was a guy who seemed to crave it, but ultimately the elders removed him from leadership.

In most churches there is a kingpin. There is some guy who struts around loving power, craving power and getting power. These guys pretend they are wise agents of God; but nothing could be further from the truth. They are pompous, arrogant, dominant jerks who love to lord it over the people. I have seen them many times. They want people to think they are spiritually mature.

James had seen those guys. He had seen the Pharisees who strutted around making people believe they were the real high up agents of God. So he decided to show the people who the real wise people were. It wasn't those guys lording it over the people. It was those who reflected God's grace.

Who are the really wise people at church? If you would have asked that question to most living in the first century, they would have said the religious leaders. They are the smart ones. They are really educated. James says take a long serious look at them; because many aren't wise and many don't have understanding.

The context of this passage still has to do with teachers and teaching. The lost religious leaders were claiming they were teachers and they also were claiming they had the blessings of God and the wisdom of God.

The point here is that:

**THOSE WHO HAVE TRULY EXPERIENCED THE GRACE OF GOD WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT NOT ONLY BY THEIR CAREFUL TEACHING, BUT BY THEIR GRACE CHARACTER.**

Now **verse 13** uses two words, one is "wise" and the other "understanding." The first word "wisdom" has to do with a wisdom that fears God and very carefully and reverently thinks through matters in light of the Word of God. The second word "understanding" refers to knowledge at a very learned and expert level. So James begins by asking a question—who is the one who has true wisdom and who is the one who is very skilled and learned from God's perspective. Then James says if you are wise "let him show" it. In other words, let's see it. I like what one commentator said, wisdom is not just something one possesses in his head, he needs to show it in his conduct (George M. Stulac, *James*, p. 133).

There are four main demonstrations that display the fact that one is wise and does have understanding. You can analyze yourself from this text and determine whether or not you are developing into a wise person who has understanding:

**DEMONSTRATION #1** – A grace believer will demonstrate God’s wisdom by a good behavior that is gentle. **3:13**

The adjective “good” actually refers to doing good outward things. One who is wise is one who does things that are right and honorable (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 228-229). As they are doing these outward things, they do them with a gentleness and a meekness (*Ibid.*, p. 376). Wise people are not loud, dominant people who push others around. They are involved in many good things and quietly and meekly do them. Wise people are humble, gentle people.

**DEMONSTRATION #2** – A grace believer will demonstrate God’s wisdom by not doing things out of bitter jealousy. **3:14a**

That word “bitter” refers to doing something with a bitter, harsh disposition (*Ibid.*, p. 360). What we may observe is that the adjective “bitter” is modifying “jealousy.” So there are people who claim they are right with God and they are bitterly, hatefully jealous of other people and that is why they do what they do. You cannot see the bitter jealousy because it is in their hearts, but this is what motivates them.

**DEMONSTRATION #3** – A grace believer will demonstrate God’s wisdom by not doing things motivated by selfish ambition. **3:14b**

Don’t kid yourself, there are people at church and this is what drives them. They are driven by a desire for self-glory. They go to church services, but they want the glory. They are hatefully jealous and they are ambitious and they are selfish. This is what is in their hearts. These are people who pretend to be wise people of God.

James says in **verse 15** that they not only are not wise, but they form, as one writer said, an “unholy triad.” They are not blossoming in grace from above; they are becoming more and more evil:

**Evil Reality #1** - They are earthly. **3:15a**

They are not focused on God’s Word, but on the world. Earthly wisdom leaves out God. It is not interested in what is heavenly. It is wisdom that is from this world and is totally and completely restricted to this world.

**Evil Reality #2** - They are natural. **3:15b**

The word natural is often used in the Bible as the opposite of spiritual. This is the kind of wisdom that is humanistic and natural apart from God. These people at church are motivated by the same objectives as the lost world. They are anything but spiritual.

**Evil Reality #3** - They are demonic. **3:15c**

There is a demon-inspired and demon-possessed wisdom that is promoted and propagated. It is the tongue that unleashes demonic wisdom. These are people who go to church regularly, but they are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, but by a demonic spirit.

According to **verse 16**, when you have jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and all kinds of evil things taking place. This kind of thing is evil, bad and vile.

I have seen this in a church. I saw it in Pocatello, Idaho. I lived it. There were jealous, hateful people in that church and it was a church filled with all sorts of evil kinds of things. There was a man who stole the children's Sunday School money and he also stole part of an offering that was to go to a school. There were many immoral things that surfaced that you wouldn't believe if I told you. There was an actual hatred among some of the people against the Word of God and the doctrines of God. They hated the fact that we had a Wednesday and Sunday night service. There was lying in Pocatello like I have never seen anywhere else in all my years of ministry. In fact, a man, who was in our church who now teaches at Multnomah as a professor of literature, said he had never seen lying like that in his life and he said I often thought to myself, don't these people fear God. Now the people leading this were calling secret meetings and claiming they were led of God. The leaders of this hornets' nest were pretending they were spiritual. They were earthly, natural and demonic. This was not led of God. This was not God's Spirit and this was not God's grace.

**DEMONSTRATION #4** – A wise believer in the Grace Age will demonstrate God's true heavenly wisdom from above by his personality. **3:17-18**

There is a true wisdom that does come from above. You can assess your own life and determine whether or not you have it. There are ten traits to look for in one who truly has experienced the grace of God.

**Trait #1** - The grace/wise believer will be pure. **3:17a**

The wise believer will pursue that which is pure. He will be striving for a blameless life that is free of stain and blemish. It certainly will not mix itself with that which is earthly or demonic. People right with God pursue a pure life. It is part of God's character and they want it in their character.

**Trait #2** - The grace/wise believer will be peaceable. **3:17b**

The wise believer is not some combatant that is always looking for some fight with someone because he is jealous.

**Trait #3** - The grace/wise believer will be gentle. **3:17c**

This is just the opposite of being hard and harsh. Grace wisdom is lenient, not rigid. Grace leaders don't abuse their power, they are gentle in the way they use it.

**Trait #4** - The grace/wise believer will be reasonable. **3:17d**

The wise person, as one writer said, is "open to reason." This does not mean that a wise person does not have convictions or is gullible. What this means is that a wise person is teachable and is open to being taught the Word of God and the wisdom of God. A wise person knows when he is hearing truth. Unwise people are close-minded to the truth. They are set in their ways and are not reasonable.

**Trait #5** - The grace/wise believer will be full of mercy. **3:17e**

The wise believer is not just merciful, but is one who is full of mercy. One who is growing in grace realizes more and more the grace of God in his own life. Wise people realize the wonder of the mercy of God to them. They understand that God in His mercy reached out to them when they were helpless and hopeless, and they attempt to minister that way for God.

**Trait #6** - The grace/wise believer will produce good fruit. **3:17f**

The wise person is interested in producing good fruit. The adjective "good" is different than the one used in **verse 13**. This particular word has to do with good that really benefits others and in what is best for them. It is moral; it is kind and attractive (*Ibid.*, p. 2). The noun "fruits" is plural.

Those who are becoming wise are involved in doing all kinds of good things for people. They radiate it from the inside.

**Trait #7** - The grace/wise believer will be unwavering. **3:17g**

The wise believer is not a doubleminded uncertain and unstable person. He has a certainty to him.

**Trait #8** - The grace/wise believer will not be hypocritical. **3:17h**

A wise person is not some hypocrite, he is the real deal. A truly wise person is not some play-acting hypocrite. He is a straight shooter. There is a genuineness and a certainty to one who is wise.

**Trait #9** - The grace/wise believer will produce righteous fruit. **3:18a**

Wise people are always interested in bearing fruit for God. The fruit will line up with the Word of God. Righteous fruit is always produced through those who have the true wisdom of God.

**Trait #10** - The grace/wise believer will promote peace. **3:18b**

A wise person is a peace promoter and he associates with those of like mind. Peacemakers produce a righteous atmosphere.

People who go to church can pretend to be spiritual and it is nothing but a phony façade. There are people who go to church and they are insincere and they don't care. They are not after truth and they are not developing in grace.

The threat is very real. Don't fall into that trap. For those who have experienced the grace of God, they need to display it in their character and may God help us to do just that.