

James Chapter 1E

With every passing week I become more convinced that we live in a world that is full of fools

- All you need do is turn on the daily news to see the folly of man clearly played out before you're watching eyes.
 - Riots on college campuses, looting Starbucks, people parading their immorality in the face of a holy God. This my friends is foolishness!
 - Angry people slandering authorities, proudly wearing hats in the shape of human genital and they fully expect to be taken serious.
- Many times I have asked myself, "How in the world did we get to this point?"
- And then I remember that every human being, including myself is born in a sinful, fallen state, all of mankind comes from the womb separated from God, totally disconnected from the source of all true wisdom.

Solomon makes it clear that every child who comes into this world is born in a congenital state of foolishness.

Proverbs 22:15 **Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.**

- Solomon's Father, King David describes the foolishness of man in this way:

Psalms 14:1 **The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good. 2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. 3 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.**

- Very often, when people hear the word "Fool" they think of someone who suffers some sort of mental deficiency.
- BUT the fool in the book of Proverbs is not the man who is mentally deficient, but rather the man who is morally deficient. He ignores or turns aside from God's commandments and lives in the corruption of his flesh.
- IS there any hope for fallen man?

Can't he see that God our great creator has revealed himself in Nature? Can't he stare up into the sky and observe how the heavens declare the glory of God?

- Yes, God has made himself known to man by means of his creation.
- BUT man in his sinful foolishness, has rejected the knowledge of God.

1 Corinthians 1: 21 **For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.**

- Because sinful man rejected the wisdom of God as it was revealed in creation God was pleased to make himself known by means of preaching.
- **It pleased God through the folly of what we preach (Paul said) to save those who believe!**

So it is that the medium through which God has chosen to impart His divine wisdom is the proclamation of His Holy Word.

Psalm 19: 7 **The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;**

- God has chosen to reveal his divine wisdom to His beloved people through His Living and Abiding Word.
- The Spirit of God draws upon the Word of God that has been stored up in our hearts. He applies divine precepts to the unique circumstances in our lives so that we may walk in wisdom and glorify him.
- If we find ourselves in a situation and we don't know what to do we need to ask.

James 1: 5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him..**

- The more of God's Word we store up in our hearts, the more divine wisdom will be available to us.

This theme of Wisdom that we first encountered in Vs 5 is one of three main themes that James will keep returning to as we work our way through his letter.

(Trials, Wisdom and Class divisions)

We have already established that the wisdom of God comes to man through the medium of God's Word. As we study the next paragraph in James we will find that God provides:

1. Wisdom for Salvation
2. Wisdom through Hearing
3. Wisdom for Obedience

1 Wisdom for Salvation

The wisdom that comes from God, that which He imparts through His Word is able to make one wise for salvation. We see this in Paul's letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:14 **But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

- God's plan of Salvation is progressively revealed to us through the pages of Holy Scripture. Beginning with Genesis 3:15, no sooner did our first parents fall into sin that God preached the Gospel for the very first time.

- The progressive revelation of God's plan of salvation finds its fullness in the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- James describes God's wisdom in salvation in this way:

James 1: 18 **Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**

- Let's break this verse down into more easily digestible bites.

“**Of His own will**” James is saying: That in a deliberate act of his own sovereign will, without constraint or counsel from anyone else, before the creation of the world God graciously chose to redeem a remnant of men from the ravages of sin granting them spiritual and eternal life by the Word of Truth.

- Paul affirms this in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,** 4 **even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love** 5 **he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,**

Back to James: **Of his own will....**

“**He (that is God) brought us forth**” Literally, He gave birth to us, This speaks of the regeneration of those who were at one time dead in transgressions and sin.

Jesus spoke about this rebirth when he was confronted by Nicodemus at night.

John 3:3 **Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."** 4 **Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"**

- Jesus told Nick that he needed to be Born Again, Born from Above and Nick didn't understand. So Jesus explained using language from Ezekiel 36

5 **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** 6 **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** 7 **Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**

- There is a New Birth, a birth that is not biological but spiritual that cleanses from sin and empowers by the Spirit.
- Jesus and Ezekiel clearly state that this new birth is the sovereign Work of God.

In the same way that NO child has ever been born into this world as a result of his or her own will. His conception is by the will of his parents. Gestation and delivery come by the will of God.

- Johnny Carson told the story of when he and his son were having an argument and His Son said, “I did not ask to be born.” To which Johnny replied, “If you would have asked I would have said NO!”

Now we understand that the new birth comes as the result of God’s sovereign will and not the will of man. Listen to Paul’s Words as he writes to Titus.

Titus 3: 4 **But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,**
 5 **he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,**
 6 **whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,**

What do we know? It is the gracious work of God, through the preaching of the Gospel that imparts Wisdom for salvation.

- Now that we have been made alive in Christ, God begins a work of transformation. He graciously opens our ears to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

John 10: 27 **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

- That brings us to our second point: God gives wisdom through hearing.
- It is God’s Word that Gives us Life AND it is God’s Word that transforms our lives

2 Wisdom Through Hearing

James 1: 19 **Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.**

- James doesn’t mince words, he doesn’t use flowery speech or high minded reasoning, in essence he says, Because the Word of God is powerful and because God gives life through His Word: You need to do more listening and less talking!
- Be quick, be eager to listen and contemplate the Word of God then STOP and think, wait before you share what you believe are such great insights.
- In just a little while James will say:

Jas 3:1 **Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**

John Gill comments on James 1:19 saying:

“We should fly, as doves to their windows; should make haste, and be early in our attendance on it, as well, as constant; and receive it with all readiness, and with a sort of greediness of mind, that our souls may be profited, and God may be glorified:

James draws attention to 2 things that hinder our ability to hear the Word of God.

1. Too much Talking.
2. Too short of a fuse - Anger.

AS I was meditating on the words of James **let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;** The thought came to my mind that this could be a good description of someone who possesses the characteristic of meekness.

- Then I thought there is no better example of meekness than the Lord Jesus.
- The Prophet Isaiah describes the meekness of Christ for us.

Isaiah 42: 1 **Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.**

- Jesus did not lift up his voice in the streets and he was gentle with those he came to save.
- He was Meek, Quiet, not easily angered, He spent a great deal of time in communion with the Father.
- The command that James puts forth is simply a command for us to actively cooperate with God in his transforming work.

Over the past few weeks we have seen lots of angry protesters lifting their voices in the streets all across the nation. And while they may have a legitimate point it seems to me that they are much more interested in speaking than they are in listening. And their anger is certainly not producing the righteousness of God.

- I have found in my own life that my fleshly anger never leads to righteousness. On the contrary, my anger leads to unrighteousness in both speech and action.

Words become harsh rather than healthy, cutting rather than calming, accusing rather than affirming. And sadly my anger has often hurt the ones that I love the most.

If we are going to hear the Word of the Lord and grow in wisdom there are a few things we need to put away to remove from our lives. James tells us to:

James 1: 21 **Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

- Interesting fact here, the word James uses for “Filthiness” (rhuparia) is closely related to the term that is used for Ear Wax.
- The reason why some believers struggle to hear the Word of God is because the moral filthiness that is yet remaining in their lives has stopped up their ears, like a bad case of ear wax.

The Word is Clear, the Holy Spirit is speaking through the Word, Wisdom is crying out but her words are falling on deaf ears.

- Like having a conversation with my mother in-law. There are times when we need to speak about important issues but she can't hear us.
- When I share communion with her; her eyes are attentive but she isn't understanding my words.
- If you are living in moral compromise, giving yourself to adultery, fornication, pornography..... Your lifestyle is hardening your heart to the word of God.

By the Spirit of God each of us must put away, that is, we must take off like a garment the moral filth and corruption that hinders our ability to receive God's powerful Word.

- We cannot live at peace if we have one foot in the world and one in the Kingdom of God. We cannot continue to live in double mindedness.
- Peter agrees:

1 Peter 2: 1 **So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.**
 2 **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation,** 3 **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

- The Apostle Paul uses the same metaphor in his letters to the Colossians and Ephesians. We are to put off our former way of life and put on Christ.

After nearly 45 years of walking with the Lord I have learned that laying aside the deeds of the flesh, putting off my old self, is very much like trying to keep my ears clean.

- I seem to have an endless supply of wax that finds its way out of my head through the pathway of my ears. So also the corruption that remains in my flesh need to be continually set aside in order for me to hear the Word of God.

Remember the words of James: James 1: 21 **Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

- It is the Word of God implanted in your heart that is able to save your souls.
- I was saved (justified) through the preaching of God's Word, I am being saved (sanctified) through the continual hearing of God's Word.
- AND finally, it is the Word of God that gives me Wisdom for Obedience

3 Wisdom for Obedience

James 1: 22 **But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

- Doers of the Word are active. We could accurately translate the words of James, "Become a doer!" James fully expects that our profession of faith should be revealed through our actions. Theology must lead to practice, our faith must be seen in our everyday lives.
- We will hear this same refrain frequently from the pen of James:

James 2: 14 **What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?**

- Words are important, We must confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord. BUT The reality of our salvation needs to be displayed in a life of loving obedience.
- Paul tells us that the grace of God that brings salvation will always result in good works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in. (Eph 2:10)

SO those who are wise for salvation will display that wisdom in the fruit of obedience. The same commands that James gives to us God gave to Joshua:

Joshua 1: 8 **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

- When we fail to connect our creed with our conduct, Doctrine with our deeds, James says that we “deceive ourselves.”
- We are only fooling ourselves thinking that we are truly hearing the Word of God when there is no fruit, no follow through, no obedience in our lives.

Jesus said: Luke 6:46 **"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.**

- The wisdom of obedience reveals the fact that your life is built on the firm foundation of Christ. It doesn't matter what kind of storm arises you will remain standing.
- Moving on, James seeks to develop this point with greater clarity by using an illustration.

James 1:23 **For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.**

You may have had a day like this.

- You have a hard time getting out of bed in the morning so your normal routine of personal hygiene has to shift into hyper-drive.
- You give a passing glance in the mirror as you head out the door but the speed of your walk doesn't allow for a clear and careful inspection. So you go into your day without really taking stock of your appearance.

If you would have taken the time to look carefully in the mirror, you might have noticed:

- The vast array of vegetation that remained between your teeth from last night's spinach salad.
- You left the house without noticing that the new pants that you wore as you strutted into the office still had that long sticker running down the leg advertising the size of your waist. You wonder why your secretary said: 34 x 32.
- If you looked hard enough you may have noticed that, you have black sock on your right foot and a blue sock on your left foot.
- Worse yet, in your haste you neglected to zip those brand new trousers that you so proudly displayed for all the world to see.
- ALL day long, none of your co-workers, none of your friends took it upon themselves to advise you of your wardrobe malfunction. They simply walked away with a strange smile on their faces.

The Word of God is like a mirror to the soul and just as we gaze into a mirror to inspect and improve our physical condition, so we gaze into the spiritual mirror of God's Word to inspect and improve our spiritual condition.

- If we look at the mirror and don't take the effort to make those changes then why look at all? My hair is a mess but I don't comb it. My teeth have spinach but I don't brush them... Why bother looking at the mirror?
- If we look into the word of God but never obey the commands of God then aren't we simply fooling ourselves?