

Pt 10 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Wisdom from Above

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 04-18-2018

‡James 3:13-18:

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

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.

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.

Tonight, we come to a very interesting part of James. It is a discussion concerning wisdom. Wisdom is something that God is concerned about. That is why He mentions the **word wisdom 234 times** in our Bible and the word “**wise**” **247 times**. From the first mention in the Book of Genesis all the way to the last mention in the Book of Revelation, wisdom is a vital part of the believer’s life.

The Greek word that wisdom comes from is pronounced “*Sofia*,” and it pertains to two different types of wisdom; **earthly wisdom (wisdom from below)**, and **godly wisdom (wisdom from above)**. Either way it means **having understanding, knowledge, and insight about something**.

Wisdom is mentioned the most of course in the Books of **Proverbs** and **Ecclesiastes**, which were written by King Solomon, whom we all know the Bible says God gave him **a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like him before him, neither after him would any arise like unto him.** (1 Kings 3:12) Solomon was endued with this wisdom from God. While he did a lot of good things with his wisdom, he also did a lot of bad things. Just because someone has a lot of wisdom does not mean they will always use it wisely.

In the **Book of Job**, we find that he mentions wisdom **23 different times!** You see, wisdom often comes by experience, something Job learned first-hand.

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

James asks the question “**who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?**” Right away many people that would hear that would have someone in mind that they know to have wisdom and knowledge. We all know these people, don’t we? The wisest man I ever knew was my dad, and not just because he was my dad because I’ve heard other people say the same thing about him. He was a very quiet man but when he spoke you knew something great was about to come out. Some of you sat under his teaching. -- But we all know those that seem to have greater wisdom than others, especially when it comes to handling God’s Word or having Spiritual wisdom.

Here, James is saying that the man who claims to be a wise man and endued with knowledge will prove it by the way he lives his life; “**good conversation and works with meekness of wisdom.**” You can go around claiming to be wise all day long but if your life doesn’t bear that out then it is just empty words. A truly wise person will have the **fruit of wisdom** in their life. In other words, just as James stated that faith without works is dead, well, so is wisdom without works.

I believe the implication here is that these wise and endued with knowledge folks are considered to be teachers. You see, that was one of the things that was a concern in James’ day as well as in our day, that those that are teachers must have true wisdom. We’ve already studied in verse one of this chapter, James stating: **James 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.** We concluded that the word “**Masters**” here is referring to **teachers**.

So, James continues with the thought concerning those that claim to be teachers.

There is nothing worse than sitting under a teacher that does not have wisdom of the subject they are trying to teach. It would be like me teaching Algebra classes. If you want to fail Algebra then I’m the guy for you but if you want to learn how to do it, you better not listen to a word I have to say because I failed high school algebra and even though I had to take it in college, I only passed it by the skin of my teeth and there is no way in the world I could pass it now.

That’s an academic example, but what James is more concerned about is less academic and more of a Spiritual teacher. That is the danger we are talking about, when the spiritual teacher’s wisdom is coming from the wrong place. Instead of Wisdom from Above, it is Wisdom from Below. Sitting under a teacher without spiritual wisdom very dangerous.

That is why there are so many warnings throughout the Bible concerning false teachers. Peter warned about it: **2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.** Peter says that these false teachers bring in “**damnable heresies.**” That spells not only destruction of the local Church but also the destruction of souls being led astray by these false teachers.

Paul also warned the Church leaders at Ephesus of false teachers as he was departing to go to Jerusalem: **Acts 20:28-31 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.**

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

One of the worst things you can allow yourself to become is bitter. Bitterness is a poison that is hard to find a cure for. You can get that way without even realizing that it is happening. Bitterness usually forms because of jealousy. That is why James says, “**envying and strife in your hearts.**”

One of the saddest things in the ministry is to see competition between preachers, pastors, missionaries, and evangelists. There is a great danger in comparing your ministry to another man’s ministry. This often causes **bitterness and envy**. I’ve been there before so I know what I’m talking about. It’s hard to look out upon an empty building on a Sunday morning and see another Church that is busting at the seams with people. It can make you bitter before you know it wondering why? It can cause you to have **strife in your heart**.

Some men become so bitter toward others because of their supposed success that they devise ways to destroy another man's ministry. They will spread lies and rumors hoping to tear down his reputation.

James is warning that those that are like this should not seek the office of teaching. When they claim to be a God-called teacher and they have this kind of bitter envying and strife in their hearts they are just "**lying against the truth**." He tells us right quick that this kind of wisdom is not godly wisdom, as we read in the next verse:

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

So, we see there is good wisdom and there is bad wisdom. Those with bitter envying and strife in their hearts is receiving their wisdom from **earthly, sensual, devilish** places. He says that kind of wisdom "**descendeth not from above**," meaning heaven or from God.

Earthly = Worldly

Sensual = Brutish, animal like

Devilish = Proceeding from an evil spirit

These false teachers are not getting their wisdom from God, they are getting it from Satan himself. That's why James says it is "devilish." Look, Satan is very real. I'm afraid we all think he is some little red man with a pitch fork and a pointed tail. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus said this about Satan in **John 8:44b ...He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

Paul also warned about these kinds of teachers. Listen to what he wrote to the Church: **Philippians 3:17-20** Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*) Those that mind earthly things are enemies of the cross of Christ. They do more damage than you can ever imagine.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Envying and strife always causes confusion. The reason being is because those things are not of God. The Bible says **1 Corinthians 14:33** For God is not *the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

Those who's wisdom comes from below stir up confusion because there is no unity from Christ.

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.

But now look at the difference when wisdom is from above, or from heaven. What a stark contrast from earthly wisdom.

Heavenly wisdom is:

- **Pure** = Clean, honest, sacred, upright, holy:

Notice it says "**first**" pure, meaning that is the very first thing that must be present in the life of the teacher, a pureness. You can't teach God's Word when your life is filled with impure thoughts and actions. Those that teach God's Word must keep themselves undefiled with the sin of this world. So, that is first and foremost in the teacher, then it says the rest will follow:

- **Peaceable** = Rest, quietness
- **Gentle** = Fair, mild, agreeable, patient, moderate
- **Easy to be intreated** = Obedient, compliant
- **Full of mercy** = Kindness and compassion
- **Good fruits** = Works, and acts of good, benevolence.
- **Without partiality** = Fairness, not preferring one over another
- **Without hypocrisy** = Holding to that which is true, sincere, and genuine

The Psalmist writes: **Psalms 37:30** The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

The teacher that has wisdom from above will bear **the fruit of righteousness**. Genuine faith produces fruit. Their teaching will yield good results. That's what good seed does when you sow it, it produces good results.

If there is one thing that each and every Christian ought to desire, it should be that we have wisdom from above, Godly wisdom that can only be given to us from the LORD. I am a full believer in education and going to schools, colleges, and seminaries, and I've learned a lot by going to all those places, but the best instruction I ever received is what I've learned from the LORD. The world cannot teach you things from above, only God can do that, and that is where knowledge begins: **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD *is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

The truth is, we are instructed over and over in the Bible that we are to seek and obtain wisdom. Listen to what Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 4:5-7** Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7 Wisdom *is the principal thing; therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

He said to "**get wisdom, get understanding**." How do we "**get**" it? Well, remember what we've already studied in **James 1:5-6** If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Jesus also said in **Matthew 21:22** And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

And Jesus said this in **Matthew 7:7-11** Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

What greater thing to ask for than wisdom from above? I can't think of anything needed more.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version