



Lesson 13 August 29th, 2020

Two Kinds of Wisdom

Study Scripture – James 3:13-18; 5:7-12

Background Scripture – James 3 & 5

Key Verse:

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.

James 3:17

INTRODUCTION

The Lesson Study for today continuously looks at the personality or the psychology of mankind. Human beings tend to look for and to rate people based on the credentials that the world offers. If you happen to have a strong or forceful personality and if you have skills of great public speaking or even great marketing skills where you are very persuasive, the world will base their assessment of you on that. With that you would be regarded as being great and success will very likely come your way. People won't stop to think that you're a liar, that you say one thing yesterday and a different thing today, that you made promises which are outrageous for you cannot ever fulfill them, and that in fact you are as James says a fig tree which bears olives, and a stream that produces bitter water one minute and sweet water the next minute. The world approves of unnatural persons.

Now it is possible for you to think that this teaching of James is not relevant to your life. But remember that when the Antichrist comes, if you believe in that part of the biblical prophecy, his deception, his lying spirit and his exceptional negotiating power will fool practically the entire world. The only people that will not believe in accepting the evil coming on the world are those that recognize that these two individuals, the antichrist and the false Prophet of Satan, are those that belong to Christ, kept by the Holy Spirit.

The world seems to love contradictions. The more impossible contradictions the more they seem to love it. So we must think seriously about why human beings including those in the body of Christ are like that.

The effects of sin in believers runs really deep and there is only one way for us to be reshaped so that the righteous nature of our character becomes predominant.

We tend to forget that human beings have to make choices. The Holy Spirit will speak to you and invite you to come to Christ but you have the right to stay exactly where you are and will not move. You're not moving is a choice. You do not have to do or make actively a move one way or the other.

We are given an example of the craziness in human nature. When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi He asked His disciples, ***Who do people say that the Son of Man?***

The disciples responded by saying that some people said that the Son of Man was John the Baptist, others said Elijah, others Jeremiah, or some other one of the prophets.

But then Jesus addressed them directly and asked, ***“But who do you say that I am?”***

The always eloquent Peter answered, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”***.

Then Jesus answered Peter, ***“You are blessed Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father in heaven”***.

Jesus made significant statements to Peter and the disciples at that point about who He was and what He would do, going to Jerusalem, suffering many things, falling into the hands of the leaders of Israel, and be killed and resurrected the third day. Remember Jesus’ primary mission was to reveal what the Father was like and then go to Calvary to die for the sins of men as the sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth.

This was a clear statement about the necessity of the Cross but using the same mouth that had just made an extraordinarily beautiful statement about Jesus Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke his Lord, saying,

“God forbid Lord! This must not happen to you”.

Now Jesus had no alternative but to turn and say to Peter,

“Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me because you are not setting your mind on God's interests but on man's. Matthew 16.

This puts in front of us that there is a stark and unpleasant reality in human nature for here Peter changed from being a spokesman for God to speaking for Satan. Our tongue can change from one thing to something completely different because our nature or personality is so unstable. It is not so easy to think according to the way of God, the way of true ***Wisdom***.

We are therefore now faced with the fact of the existence of earthly, natural, demonic Wisdom, as well as the existence of God's Wisdom which comes some above and which is truth. The two kinds of Wisdom are totally different and cannot be mixed up.

The book of Proverbs and the book of James were written to point out clearly that God is interested in character. The world is not. Hence there are two kinds of wisdom. We are exhorted to look carefully at this issue.

The worldview of the world is antagonistic to God. But remember that God rules over time and requires that we are obedient to His will in every aspect. God's worldview encompasses the use of our tongue, the material wealth we have, and how we treat others. Whatever we have materially belongs to God, and the people that we see around us also belong to God. Wisdom involves following after God and His instructions accepting His worldview, for that is the only view that will lead to eternal life and health.

THE TEXT

James 3:13 – 18

Verse 13. James’ exhortation continues. What is it that proves whether or not a person is wise and has knowledge?

Wisdom is not proved by intellectual knowledge but wisdom and understanding is shown by good conduct. Wisdom is shown by the meekness demonstrated in one’s behaviour. Here is where we now have to look at the meaning of words as one writer states as follows:



“There are two words in this verse that we should give attention to. They are the English words ‘good’ and ‘humility’. The Greek word translated ‘humility’ is *prautes* (also are rendered ‘meekness’ at times). The word that’s translated ‘good’ is *kalos*.

The core meaning of *prautes* is ‘to agree with God about ourselves’. The meek or humble person is someone who is confident of this: ‘I am who God says I am’.

A recent study concluded that Facebook and other social networks increased feelings of loneliness for some.....

God's view of us is not filtered by what we choose to post. In truth, I am lonely, afraid, I'm scared; but I'm also gifted and loved. I am a child of God with a complex swirl of hopes and fears. And I know all of this. Humility (*prautes*), then, is the view of oneself not built on comparison with other people but rather on the promises of the One who knows us completely and loves us without reservation.

Humility reduces worry and frantic uncertainty-- trading these for stability. The humble person doesn't need constant reassurance or applause, doesn't turn every bump on the road into a crisis. He or she is free of the tyranny of self, seeks to hear God's voice, and doesn't care who gets the credit. Humility that comes from wisdom should be evident in those who lead the church”.

Now with that in mind we can join with this writer and look at the real meaning of the word ‘good’. He says:

The other word we want to consider is ‘good’ (Let *him show it by his good life*). There are two primary Greek words in the New Testament that get translated by the English word ‘good’: one is *agathos* and the other is *kalos*. *Agathos* has the idea of nobility, purity, and flawlessness. *Kalos* the word found in James 3:13, means beautiful. It describes something that is not only intrinsically good, but is also attractive. A *kalos* person draws others to them. A *kalos* person is a joy to be around”.

We cannot therefore stress too much that the congregation is called a flock that follows a Good (*kalos*) Shepherd..

So with that in mind we can look at ‘who is wise’. It helps us to distinguish the false from the true.

Note that a teacher needs wisdom which is defined as the ability to look at life from God’s perspective. Understanding involves discerning, comprehending and perceiving the truth. We are told that one of the marks of wisdom is gentleness, which is literally the word used to describe a horse that has been broken and trained to submit to the bridle. It therefore represents strength under control.

The only controller by which a believer should be governed have is the Holy Spirit, and if under this control of divine authority, the tongue will be placed and kept under the control of God, so He can use it as He wishes. Wisdom is a moral matter.

It is necessary for a teacher to remain humble even if it is difficult. That state of mind and way of life should be consistent with a deportment led by the Spirit, and that is what “*conversation*” means. There should be a holy life, a holy walk, holy work, and holy speech.

Learning is important but it’s of little worth if it does not teach someone how to humble themselves and to be proper and correct in their conduct toward others. Humility should be a necessary trait of the teacher.



Verse 14. Note now that your life can contradict your claims. We are now right back to human nature, our nature. James now describes the character of earthly wisdom and contrasts it with the wisdom which is given by God.

It is therefore very possible for someone to have **bitter envy and self-seeking** embedded in the heart. Once this exists it is not really wisdom at all. False teachers and false brethren will claim wisdom but their lives, their behaviour,, their self-deception, will contradict their claims for that wisdom that they claim to have access to and by which they assess everything is an evaluation by worldly standards which makes personal gain life's highest goal, according to one writer. Bitter envy and strife are not brought by God and these vices are not to be in the people of God. Self-promotion and lying involves false teaching which are naturally opposed to the truth. These traits are contrary to the meekness of wisdom and they cannot exist together in the same heart.

James is addressing the congregation and therefore he is pointing out that people and groups that compete for prominence saying that they belonged to Christ and they are better than others are denying Christ and the glory that belongs to Him. They are really boasting and lying against the truth.

There are bad attitudes such as boasting or self-seeking glory, and the existence of these traits or motives make one unfit for the teaching office. Vain glorying and lying is not of God.

Verse 15. This kind of behavior, this so-called wisdom comes from the world and is demon-like, sensual, interested in deception, hypocrisy, and evil. It is animalistic for it seeks to gratify the passions. It is inspired by demons and kept in a person by demonic influence. This wisdom comes from beneath, rests on earthly principles and earthly motives. It is sensual for it indulges the flesh and fulfills the lusts and desires of the flesh. Being inspired by devils who are proud and who are against God, this wisdom is condemned by God.

It is therefore the opposite of the meekness of wisdom mentioned before and therefore results in confusion and every evil thing.

Verse 16. God opposes every evil thing and where there is jealousy, personal ambition, envying and strife: we know that these definitely are not provided by the wisdom of God. This “wisdom” is devilish and not divine and those that possess it are doing the work of Satan.

The ‘fruit’ of this earthly wisdom is confusion and every evil thing. That is what the devil produces, and his wisdom will produce evil. Whatever comes from the world will partake of the spirit of the world. The world produces tumult, agitation, unsettledness, with no trust or confidence, and no stability in plan our purpose. Love and harmony are not part of what the world produces. It does not bring any lasting prosperity or progress in divine things.

The shepherds therefore filled by devilish wisdom can only produce worthless and wicked shepherds like themselves. Because they are led by pride or profit and are competing for prominence they will not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the wounds of the injured. They will not bring back those that stray, nor will they seek for the lost, but when they find the people they will treat them with force and with harshness. They will not feed the sheep and according to Ezekiel 34:2-5 the sheep are scattered and become food for all the wild animals.

Verse 17. In contrast the wisdom that God gives brings several good and great things.

It is first pure; that is, free from defilement. It makes a man upright, holy, sincere, innocent, and chaste. It enlightens the intellect, purifies the heart, and makes the man do good. There will be no sinful motives or attitudes.



It will not lead to persecution instigated and led by that person, for it is a simple and peace-loving. It makes one want to live in peace with all others. This word is used of God's disposition as a King. One writer notes about God:

“He is gentle and kind, although in reality he has every reason to be stern and punitive toward men in their sin”.

Another writer points out:

“It is impossible to find an English word to translate this quality. Matthew Arnold called it ‘sweet reasonableness’ and it is the ability to extend it to others the kindly consideration we would wish to receive ourselves”.

It is gentle or considerate of others. It is often translated as moderation. It is in another passage translated as patient. That person is meek, modest, interpreting things in the best possible way.

There definitely is no partiality. That person is never controlled by their self-interest, worldly honor or the fear of men. It gives to every man what his due.

The wisdom from above produces someone who is open to reason. It means to be easily persuaded when a matter brought before him and his response always is right and proper. There is no stubbornness and clinging to evil. That person is open to appeals and is ready to follow the truth and sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others. This means that wisdom makes one willing to listen especially to the shy and marginalized voices that we usually don't pay attention to. These people in need will go to those with wisdom for help and for a listening ear.

When James says this wisdom is *willing to yield*, it means as several writers state:

“Not stubborn nor obstinate; of a yielding disposition in all indifferent things; obsequious, docile”.

Conciliatory (only here in the N.T.) is the opposite of stiff and unbending”.

This wisdom produces one who is full of mercy, actively sympathetic to the needy, and ready to do good for those who are vulnerable or helpless. Compassion and tender mercies are displayed at all times. There is always a readiness to forget a transgression and to grant forgiveness to an offender.

The wisdom of God produces good fruit or good works. It produces a person who is single-minded in working for God. There is no double mindedness. There should be no hypocrisy, no professing to be sincere while masking and disguising the true self. There is no pretending to be what you are not.

Verse 18. The wisdom of God produces righteousness, and the fruits are obvious. There is peace and joy. The virtues of God flourish.

To make it easy for everyone to understand what he is saying as James uses a metaphor from agriculture which involves sowing in peace and reaping a harvest of righteousness.

The wisdom of God will therefore remind you that when you sow you will not get a good outcome immediately. A wise leader or brother or sister will speak and sometimes hold back, giving instruction and serving by example. They know that God is faithful and that the fruits of righteousness would appear in God's due time.

Note that the idea is that when the Word of God is sown properly there is a harvest of righteousness. A controlled tongue filled with the praise of God and a rejection of evil is most necessary to the spiritual ‘walk’.



James 5:7-12

When we read the opening verses of Chapter 4 we are given a frightening glimpse of what was probably happening in the society in which Christians lived. We shudder to think that some of that was happening in the early church and it is difficult to imagine that the offenses in this chapter and in chapter 5 were actually being carried out in the church. But when we look at history we know that the Christian church is quite capable of things which are as bad as what goes on in the rest of society. We do not have to make too much stress on slavery and wars, corruption, ill-treatment of the poor and vulnerable in the society, and other evil things that happen everywhere, in our country as well as in different countries.

James therefore pulls no punches for he has to

-encourage and

- warn'

Whether we like to think about it or not Christians and Christians do engage in wars and fights among themselves and against other people. They lust, mislead, tell lies to the electorate because they want power; pay bribes and murder to fulfill their desire for pleasure and material things.

Some in the church are rich and do not pay attention to the poorer brethren and their needs. In doing so they reflect exactly what happens in the larger society.

So we are faced with the question as to how far Christians want to go or should go in opposing the evils of lust, sexual desires, the seizing of what does not belong to them, and opposing the evils in our group and in the society? These are difficult issues and believers have to decide when they read the book of James whether they will be stirred to intercessory prayer for their society and whether they want to obey the biblical calling to pray for the society.

This is an issue for some for they, when they look at the evils in the society, they do not want to wait for God to act and they engage in all kinds of liberation movements and violence. This of course leads to destruction and suffering for many.

There is of course in all this the often forgotten matter of proclaiming the clear prophetic warning, the warning against wickedness and injustice, and sharing of the truth. This is often not in our interest. It might also be that we are afraid of the blowback to our message.

No wonder therefore that this Book has created all kinds of opposition and led to sundry kinds of resistance by believers. The book of James certainly reminds us of the prophetic warnings in the Book of Amos.

Verse 7. In verses 7 to 9, three expressions emerge to focus the Christian on their journey to the Kingdom of God. In verse 7 Christians are called upon to be patient. The patience extends to many areas in the walk of a Christian. We are for instance to bear our afflictions without murmuring, and not to seek out revenge, as that is not becoming of the life you now live. Many times people act as though there is only one time, their time, and others must fit that need. We are God's children and as such should wait upon Him to make decisions for us, as He will do so for our best interests. And so, we must wait upon the Only Wise, Almighty and Omniscient God to guide us to the Kingdom.

God is the judge of all and as such will be the one to take revenge on all the unjust, but at the same time, we should learn, yes learn and exercise patience and long suffering as God has Himself demonstrated with us, so that all who would come to a saving knowledge of God has



the time to do so, and all those who refuse God will have the body of evidence against them in that day of Judgment, so all may be accomplished.

As James instructs us, we are to wait upon God and not lose heart. "A man to whom it is given to wait for a reward keeps up his courage, and when he has to wait, he says, 'It is no more than I expected. I never reckoned that I was to slay my enemy at the first blow. I never imagined that I was to capture the city as soon as ever I had digged the first trench; I reckoned upon waiting, and now that is come, I find that God gives me the grace to fight on and wrestle on, till the victory shall come.' And patience saves a man from a great deal of haste and folly." (Spurgeon)

On the issue of the early and latter rain,

Moffatt explains: "The farmer had to wait for this rainfall twice in the year; but although he could do nothing to bring it, he did not lose heart, provided that he was obeying the will of his God."

Verse 8. In verses 7 to 9, three expressions emerge to focus the Christian on their journey to the Kingdom of God. The first was for the Christian, the child of God to be patient. The second expression centers around Christians establishing their hearts. Essentially, what this means is that Christians should let their faith be firm, without wavering, their practice of what is good constant and continued, without tiring, and their resolutions for God and heaven fixed, in spite of all sufferings or temptations.

God has left the wicked to somewhat prosper in this world, knowing that this is all that they will have. Yes the afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked in all ages have been a great trial to the faith of the people of God, but God is wise, and so His children shall trust in His judgments.

God has carried us through in our afflictions and will continue to be there for us. With respect to prosperity, we know we have laid up our treasures in heaven, so even though now it is a struggle, our eternity with God will be marvelous. This of course does not mean that we must not understand the laws in our society and use these laws to restrain wickedness. In many societies the opportunity is also provided to press for changes to improve the lot of the people and to bring about changes which will please God. In the Old Testament we read of instances where the people approached the authorities to make changes that would bring about equity. This was not forbidden by God but encouraged by God.

Verse 9. The advice from James is not to cause stress on or towards the fellow saints. Some believe that this theme seemed to have come out of the circumstances surrounding discussions of **circumcision and uncircumcision**, as brethren grieved one another over this topic. Other areas where groaning arose was concerning the oppression and treatment from the rich persecutors, and in general treatment from those how did profess the holy faith. Those who are in the midst of common enemies, and in any suffering circumstances, should be more especially careful not to grieve nor to groan against one another, otherwise judgments will come upon them as well as others. The Apostle Paul was well aware of the behaviour of even those in the church and had to deal with deviations from correct attitudes and neglect of the poorer brethren even at the Lord Supper.

So the Apostle warns do not make one another uneasy by your murmuring and groans at what befalls you, nor by your distrustful groans as to what may further come upon you. Also by your



revengeful groans against the instruments of your sufferings, nor by your envious groans at those who may be free from your calamities: do not make yourselves uneasy and make one another uneasy by thus groaning to and grieving one another.

The best way to consider what was said by James is to consider the work of a farmer, the diligent and patient aspects of their character. They cultivate the field through whatever weather befalls them to prepare it. They plant the seed in faith that it will produce the desired harvest. While **waiting** for that harvest the farmer still works the field to give the best yield possible, all the time patiently awaiting the promise of the harvest.

If you should be called to wait a little longer than the husbandman does, is it not something proportionally greater and infinitely more worth your waiting for?

Verse 10. We are encouraged to be patient by the examples of the prophets. From this verse we should take many lessons.

First, the prophets, on whom God put the greatest honour, and for whom He had the greatest favour, were most afflicted. These individuals had the hardest usage in this world, **however**, those who were the greatest examples of suffering affliction. They suffered much; underwent cruel mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, famine, nakedness, and death in various shapes. Some were stoned, others sawn asunder, and others killed by the sword. They were the best and greatest examples of patience.

We should learn from the examples of those who came before us, and with joy know that we shall overcome as they have overcome, to be with God in glory. Thus we should hereby be reconciled to affliction to the understanding that *tribulation worketh patience*.

Verse 11. We should look upon righteous and patient sufferers as the happiest people, for they knew that there would be light at the end of the tunnel and that the day of glory would dawn. In the case of Job you have an instance of a variety of miseries, and of such as were very grievous, but under all he could bless God, and, as to the general bent of his spirit, he was patient and humble: and what came to him in the end?

Why, truly, God accomplished and brought about those things for him which plainly prove that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. The best way to bear afflictions is to look to the end of them; and the pity of God is such that He will not delay the bringing of them to an end when His purposes are once answered. The tender mercy of God is such that He will make His people an abundant amends for all their sufferings and afflictions. His bowels are moved for them while suffering, His bounty is manifested afterwards. Let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those who believe the end will crown all.

Verse 12. The sin of swearing is cautioned against. Some understand this too restrictedly, as if the meaning were, to use foul language or language unbecoming of a Christian to put them down or away. One famous example comes to mind with Peter in Matt. 26:74. This swearing is no doubt forbidden here: and it will not excuse those that are guilty of this sin to say they swear only when they are provoked to it, and before they are aware. But the Apostle's warning extends to other occasions of swearing as well as this.

Some have translated the words as—before all things; and so have made sense of this place to be that they should not, in common conversation, before everything they say, put an oath. All customary needless swearing is undoubtedly forbidden, and all along in Scripture it is condemned as a very grievous sin.



Profane swearing was very customary among the Jews, and, since this epistle is directed in general to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (as before has been observed), we may conceive this exhortation sent to those who believed not.

It is hard to suppose that swearing should be one of the spots of God's children, since Peter, when he was charged with being a disciple of Christ and would disprove the charge, cursed and swore, thereby thinking most effectually to convince them that he was no disciple of Jesus. But it was well known that they should not allow themselves to indulge in swearing; but possibly some of the looser sort of those who were called Christians might, among other sins here charged upon them, be guilty also of this. It is a sin that in later years has most scandalously prevailed, even among those who would be thought above all others entitled to the Christian name and privileges. One writer points out:

Above all things, swear not; but how many are there who mind this the least of all things, and who make light of nothing so much as common profane swearing! But why above all things is swearing here forbidden?

- (1.) Because it strikes most directly at the honour of God and most expressly throws contempt upon his name and authority.
- (2.) Because this sin has, of all sins, the least temptation to it: it is not gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation that can move men to it, but a wantonness in sinning, and a needless showing an enmity to God. Thy enemies take thy name in vain, Ps. 139:20. This is a proof of men's being enemies to God, however they may pretend to call themselves by his name, or sometimes to compliment him in acts of worship.
- (3.) Because it is with most difficulty left off when once men are accustomed to it, therefore it should above all things be watched against. And,
- (4.) "Above all things swear not, for how can you expect the name of God should be a strong tower to you in your distress if you profane it and play with it at other times?" But (as Mr. Baxter observes) "all this is so far from forbidding necessary oaths that it is but to confirm them, by preserving the due reverence of them." And then he further notes that "The true nature of an oath is, by our speech, to pawn the reputation of some certain or great thing, for the averring of a doubted less thing; and not (as is commonly held) an appeal to God or other judge." Hence it was that swearing by the heavens, and by the earth, and by the other oaths the apostle refers to, came to be in use. The Jews thought if they did but omit the great oath of Chi—Eloah, they were safe. But they grew so profane as to swear by the creature, as if it were God; and so advanced it into the place of God; while, on the other hand, those who swear commonly and profanely by the name of God do hereby put him upon the level with every common thing.

Let it suffice you to affirm or deny a thing as there is occasion, and be sure to stand to your word, and be true to it, so as to give no occasion for your being suspected of falsehood. This so you will be kept from the condemnation of backing what you say or promise by rash oaths, and from profaning the name of God to justify yourselves. It is being suspected of falsehood that leads men to swearing. Let it be known that your hold to truth, and are firm to your word, and by this means you will find there is no need to swear to what you say. Thus shall you escape the condemnation which is expressly annexed to the third commandment: *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*



CONCLUSION

James clearly wants to strengthen our hearts. We must never forget that as far as we are concerned the kingdom of God is near.

We must not grumble and wonder whether God would do good things for us. We must not be impatient but we must remember that for God His view of time is different from ours. We therefore have to hope and depend on God. One writer sums it all up for us:

“This is a timely word for the days in which we find ourselves. The way we practice patience in the world that has forgotten how to wait will create distinction within us as children of God. Our distinction will shine through when the masses fret over leadership, gnashing their teeth at elected leaders, all the while the people of God point to deserts and dreams of days the rain will come. As the voices in our church grow with passion to make our congregations great again, we will patiently point them back to the cross and show them life ripping through death. Patience is of course the long view, but it is the way of the prophets, and of God, and ultimately of restoration”.

James asked the question, **Who is wise and understanding among you?**

The man or woman that is wise is the one who has learned that God can be trusted. He lives with us. His presence therefore allows us to live with both patience and confidence as we enjoy the life that we have received abundantly.

Jesus embodied perfectly the wisdom of God.. This wisdom came from above. Jesus answers all the questions in James 3:13. So if you desire to be an under-shepherd you must learn from Him, be transformed by Him, be obedient to Him and be dependent on Him. One writer tells us that Jesus invites you to come to Him and says:

“Jesus is the peacemaker who sows in peace. He is considerate, pure and peace loving, welcoming, submissive, and full of mercy and good fruit. Let us say yes to his invitation”.

