

The Distinction of Wisdom
James 3:13-18
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Historical Context

- ❖ The book of James seems to be written to primarily Jewish believers who are in the church (1:1; 2:2) who may have been scattered after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) or after James, the brother of John, death in A.D 44. This general epistle was written to believers who were struggling with various trials (1:2), including poverty (1:9-11), oppression (2:1-13), and perseverance (4:7-11) which led to them struggling with their obedience (1:19-27) and their faith (2:14-26). Not only did they struggle with external circumstances, but internally they struggled with using their money wisely (5:1-6), being partial towards each other (2:1-13) and judging each other fairly through their conflicts (4:1-17). Therefore, James wrote to them to instruct and encourage the dispersed people in the face of their difficulties.

Purpose

- ❖ The primary purpose of the book of James is to expose the attitudes and actions which stunts the growth of believers and to exhort them to seek correct actions and attitudes which will lead to their faith maturing.

Message of the Book of James

- ❖ The message of James is “Mature faith is developed by exposing and rejecting wrong attitudes and actions and embracing right attitudes and actions.”

Message for Today

- ❖ True Wisdom is from God and shown in our Actions

Homiletical Outline

I. Action over Words – Vs. 13

- A. **Wise** – (of humans) pertaining to understanding that results in wise attitudes and conduct,
 - 1. Wise in that the wisdom is divine in nature and origin
 - 2. The word describes someone who has moral insight and skills in the practical use of their insight
 - 3. James rhetorically is asking who has the wisdom of God to his audience

- B. **Understanding** - pertaining to being knowledgeable in a way that makes one effectual in the exercise of such knowledge, expert, learned
 - 1. Who has God-like wisdom and the ability to use it correctly
- C. How Wisdom is shown:
 - 1. **Good** - pertaining to being attractive in outward appearance, beautiful, handsome, fine in outward appearance
 - a. pertaining to being in accordance at a high-level with the purpose of something or someone good, useful.
 - 2. **Behavior** - conduct expressed according to certain principles way of life, conduct
 - 3. **Deeds** - that which displays itself in activity of any kind, action, accomplishments
 - 4. **Gentleness** - the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness
- D. Summarizing Statement
 - 1. Good behavior not only meets God's standards, but its appealing to those who see it and it is done with humility of the one who shows it

II. Natural Wisdom – Vs. 14-16

- A. But – the next few verses are in direct contrast to verse 13
 - 1. **Bitter** – sharp and pungent (strong smell or taste); unsweet
 - 2. **Jealousy** - intense negative feelings over another's achievements or success, jealousy, envy
 - 3. **Selfish Ambition** – Strife, contentiousness
 - a. One who works for personal gain
 - b. Goes directly against Phil. 2:3-4
 - 4. **Heart** - as seat of physical, spiritual and mental life
 - a. as the center and source of physical life
 - b. as center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition
 - i. The mouth only speaks what's in the heart – Matt. 12:34
- B. The previous inner desires can lead to the following happening
 - 1. You can become arrogant
 - a. **Arrogant** - to boast at the expense of another, boast against, exult over
 - i. Do not be prideful
 - 2. You life against the Truth
 - a. **Lie** - to tell a falsehood
 - b. **The Truth**
 - i. Lying against the truth is lying against God
 - ii. Jesus says God's Word is true – John 17:17
 - iii. Jesus says he is the truth – John 14:6
 - iv. Jesus says the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth – John 14:17; John 16:13
- C. The distinction of Wisdom
 - 1. James doesn't call it foolishness, but rather wisdom, he just begins a distinction of wisdom

- a. This wisdom doesn't come from above (meaning heaven)
- b. But this wisdom is:
 - i. **Earthly** - pertaining to what is characteristic of the earth as opposed to heavenly
 - ii. **Natural** - pertaining to the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to it, in contrast to the realm of experience whose central characteristic is πνεῦμα, natural, **unspiritual**, worldly
 - iii. **Demonic** - originating from the lower spirit-world, infernal
 - i. Of the Devil
 - ii. When we lean to our own understanding or think in the same way the world does, we are thinking in the same manner as the demons do
- 2. How do we know this is around
 - a. There is disorder
 - i. **Disorder** - unsettled state of affairs, disturbance, tumult
 - i. opposition to established authority, unruliness
 - b. Every evil thing is taken place – Godliness is not present

III. Heavenly Wisdom – Vs. 17-18

A. **But** – these next few verses are in direct contrast to verses 16-16

B. **The Wisdom** – James identifies this as the true wisdom we should seek along with its characteristics

- 1. **First – the highest priority of this characteristic**
 - a. **Pure – Holy**
 - i. Originating from God
 - ii. Only seeks what God wants and not what you want
- 2. **Then – secondary characteristics**
 - a. **Peaceable** - pertaining to being conducive to a harmonious relationship
 - i. Peace is not the first priority of wisdom, it's holiness is. When we say or withhold things and hide behind "peace" we are not being holy but demonic
 - b. **Gentle** - not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant
 - i. Not understanding context at all but just want to be right and/or legalistic
 - c. **Reasonable** - compliant, obedient
 - d. **Full of Mercy** - kindness or concern expressed for someone in need, compassion, pity, clemency
 - e. **Good Fruits**
 - i. People are able to eat from as it meets God's standards
 - f. **Unwavering** – pertaining to not being judgmental or divisive, nonjudgmental, not divisive
 - i. Not being partial

- g. **Without Hypocrisy** - pertaining to being without pretense, genuine, sincere

C. Multiplication Effect

1. The seed whose fruit is righteousness
 - a. **Righteousness** - the quality or characteristic of upright behavior, uprightness
 - b. The origin of the seed is the righteous standard of God
2. It can only be sown in peace by those who make peace
 - a. **Peace** - a state of concord, harmony
 - i. harmony in personal relationships
 - b. **Make** - to undertake or do something that brings about an event, state, or condition, do, cause, bring about, accomplish, prepare
 - i. of conditions bring about; established
3. **Peace** is the seed sown that yields **a harvest** (lit., “fruit”) **of righteousness**. The truly wise man is a man of peace
4. Like God, who sows the seed of the living Word (cf. Matt 13:19), believers are to sow peaceable deeds that will produce a harvest of righteousness
5. Wisely sowing the seed of peace results in a multiplication of righteous deeds not only for the individual believer but also among the members of the entire church