

James 3:17-18

Wisdom, Part 2

Jeremy Doan

Holly Hills Bible Church

July 7, 2013

James 3:17-18 (NASB)

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.
18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Wisdom throughout James

- Wisdom is seen first in 1:5 – *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.*
 - *How do we obtain wisdom?*
 - *By what means does God give us wisdom?*
- *Key verse is 1:2-3: trials and testing → wisdom*
 - *Our only responsibility is faith (1:6)*
- *James has been giving examples of trials and temptations*
 - *The “measure” of our growth in wisdom is how well we do in these trials and temptations*

Wisdom through trials and temptations

Trials	1:9-12	Trial of Circumstance
Temptations	1:13-15	Anatomy of Temptation
	1:16-18	Source of bliss
	1:19-20	Response to others
	1:21-25	Hearing the Word
	1:26	Bridling the tongue
	1:27	Care for the needy
	2:1-9	Non-Partiality
	2:10-13	Integrity of the Law
	2:14-26	Sincerity of faith
	3:1-12	Integrity of speech

Table : Examples of Trials and Temptations

Contrast to Earthly wisdom

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

- Wisdom has two different sources
 - Sounds so very Pauline – Colossians 3:1
- Wisdom is known by its manifestation
- Worldly/fleshly/devilish wisdom
 - Ch.1 – doubt, wavering, inconsistency, inconstancy, bitterness, anger, wrath, filthiness
 - Ch. 2 – partiality, bigotry, dishonor, mercilessness, callousness
 - Ch. 3 – boasting, world of iniquity, restless evil, cursing (of men), jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance
- What does James expect us to do about these “earthly” actions?

Heavenly Wisdom

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

- A description of heavenly/Christly wisdom
 - Where do we see a similar list?
 - What does James indicate is the specific source of this wisdom?
 - James' words seem to anticipate Paul's teaching on identification
- Examples/teachings familiar to James
 - The Beatitudes – Matthew 5
- There is difference between “this is how you should live” and “this is how you will live”
 - James specifically notes the source of these actions

Pure and peaceful

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

- *First* – can mean first in succession, or first in rank
 - Which fits better in this context?
- *Pure* – exciting reverence, venerable, sacred; pure from every fault, immaculate; related to holiness
 - 1 John 3:3
 - Different word in 1:27 – pure is “clean from the pollution of sin”
 - See also 1:21
- *Peaceable* – disposed to peace
 - Hebrews 12:11
 - More on “peace” in the next verse

Gentle submission and compassion

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

- *Gentle* – Fitting, appropriate, suitable, proper; to be lenient, yielding, unassertive
 - Philippians 4:5
 - Similar to “meekness of wisdom” in 3:13?
- *Reasonable* – easily persuaded; compliant
 - Used only here
 - Similar word used in 3:3
- *Full of mercy* – to show mercy/compassion
 - Used also in 2:13
 - Matthew 9:13 & 23:23

Sincere in good deeds

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and **good fruits**, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*

- *Good fruits* – works, results
 - Matthew 3:10 & 7:16-18
 - More on this in the next verse
- *Unwavering* – without dubiousness, ambiguity or uncertainty
 - Used only here
 - See also 1:5-8
- *Without hypocrisy* – without pretense, unfeigned, genuine, real, true sincere
 - Romans 12:9
 - Consistency between words and actions (see 2:15-16)

Blessed are the peacemakers

And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- *Seed whose fruit is righteousness = good fruit (v.17)*
- *Peace* – civility; tranquility; health, welfare, and prosperity; wholeness, soundness, well-being; absence of confusion
 - Job 5:23; Psalm 4:8; Proverbs 3:1-2; Isaiah 32:17
- “Peace is the paramount blessing that Israel was looking for in the messianic kingdom” – Zodhiates
 - See Numbers 25:12, Leviticus 26:6*, Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 34:25 & 37:26, Malachi 2:5-6*
- Nearly all of James’ teachings have focused on earthly interactions
 - And thus the dire need of heavenly wisdom

Why can't we all just get along?

Hell is other people. –Jean-Paul Sartre

We are all on earth to help others. What on earth the others are here for, I can't imagine. – *John Foster Hall*

- James' is primarily concerned with actions – actions that reveal a sincere faith in Christ
- These actions are almost entirely centered around personal interaction
- The only way we can “survive” other people is through heavenly wisdom
- The results of heavenly wisdom, as enumerated in 3:17, cover nearly all the “trials and temptations” discussed throughout the previous passages