

May 12, 2024 PM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
James 3:13-18 – “Seek Wisdom from Above”

- A. It would be a misinterpretation if you said that James taught perfectionism, yet John Wesley used this epistle as ammunition to support his doctrinal error.¹
- The Greek word “**teleios**” can be translated as “**perfect, mature or complete.**” From that word you can hear the root “**telos**” which means the “**purpose**” or “**end-goal.**”
- B. With his telos or end goal of spiritual maturity in mind, James went on to teach what sort of wisdom we ought to be pursuing along with the fruit of grace which is righteous living. James gave a way to identify who is truly wise and understanding →**v13**

God calls you to seek His wisdom From above and its fruit.	I. “WISDOM” FROM BELOW AND ITS FRUIT II. WISDOM FROM ABOVE AND ITS FRUIT
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I. “WISDOM” FROM BELOW AND ITS FRUIT →**vv14-15**

- A. To be jealous is to feel resentment, bitterness, or hostility toward someone because they have something that you don’t.²
- Jealous can have a range. One can be merely bothered by a feeling of resentment because of another’s blessing. James’s use of “**bitter jealousy**” suggests emotions such as anger or hatred.
 - Jealousy or envy can arise from more than another person’s material gain. It could be over matters of God’s providence in their lives.
 - When struggling with jealousy or envy, consider the golden rule when Jesus quoted **Lev 19:18** “**Love your neighbor as yourself.**”³
 - Remember **1 Cor 4:7** to fight jealousy. Paul in fighting arrogance asks, “**For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive [by God’s sovereign hand]?**”
- B. James next warned against the sin of “**selfish ambition**” in **v14**. The Greek here can be translated as “**selfishness**” or “**selfish ambition.**”
- Ambition is a strong desire or aspiration to achieve something by means of hard work.
 - Prov 10:4** “**Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.**”
 - Ultimately your desire should be to glorify God, to help others, and not to exalt yourself.
 - Ambition or aspiration becomes evil if it is to fulfill some wicked desire.
- C. In **v14**, James said if you have “**bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.**” Rather than lie and cover up your sin, confess it to God. He will forgive you of your sin and help you to change your ways.
- Eccles 7:20**: “**there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and never sins.**”
 - 1 Jn 1:8** “**If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**”
- D. The NIV84 is correct to put quotes around the word “**wisdom**” in **v15**. It appears a wisdom to some yet this pseudo-wisdom “**is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.**”
- E. James told us that this “**earthly, natural, demonic**” pseudo-wisdom bears bad fruit. → **v16** “**For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.**”
- These sins will cause disorder— calamity—in your workplace, school, home, & in the church.
 - All sorts of evil sins will follow if you allow jealousy and selfish ambition in your life.

¹ It is best to read John Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* for yourselves (pp5-26). A free, scanned, digital version of this book is available using this link: https://archive.org/details/plainaccountofch0000wesl_w7y9/page/4/mode/2up

² dictionary.com

³ Mark 12:31.

II. WISDOM FROM ABOVE AND ITS FRUIT → **v17**

A. Notice the origin of this wisdom— it is from God above.

1. Because true wisdom comes from God above, we must ask Him for it.
2. Earlier in **Ja 1:5**, he said **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”**

B. Wisdom from God above is pure and untainted with sin and error of any sort.

1. When Christ spoke the wisdom that came forth from His lips was pure and undefiled.
2. In his hymn, *“’Twas on That Night When Doomed to Know,”* John Morison wrote, *“Then in His hands the cup He raised, and God anew He thanked and praised, while kindness in His bosom glowed, and from His lips salvation flowed.”*
 - a. Salvation flowed from Christ’s lips, yet as the eternal living Word, He is the ultimate source of all true wisdom.
 - b. In **1 Cor 1:29-31**, Paul told us why **“no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”**

C. How do you know if a person has this divine wisdom from above? James told us such a recipient of this wisdom will bear certain fruit as evidence of a true and living faith in Christ. According to **v17**, they will be **“peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.**

1. Wise Christians are to be peaceable. In other words, they are to be peacemakers rather than trouble makers.
 - a. Speaking of such a person in **v18**, James said that **“the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**
 - b. Dr. Simon Kistemaker, while citing the Expositor’s Bible Commentary wrote, *“In the context of James’s discussion on heavenly versus earthly wisdom this means that ‘righteousness cannot be produced in a climate of bitterness and self-seeking. Righteousness will grow only in a climate of peace.’”*⁴
2. James said that those having wisdom from above will be gentle.
 - a. The Greek word here is different than the Greek synonym often translated as “meek.”
 - b. In **v17**, this Greek word can be translated as “yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, or tolerant.”⁵ This sort of tolerance is not condoning sin the LGBTQ want Christians to do. This is closely related to the following fruit— being **“reasonable” (v17)**.
3. The Christian who has God’s wisdom from above will be **“full of mercy and good fruits.”** He or she will have the fruit of the Holy Spirit according to **Gal 5**.
 - We think of God as the one full of mercy yet we can be merciful to others when we are willing to overlook another’s sin against us (**Prov 19:11**).
4. Wise Christians are **“unwavering.”** They persevere in the faith even under trials and testing.
5. Lastly, the wise believer is **“without hypocrisy.”** He or she has a genuine faith. For the most part, what you see on Sunday at church is what the person is like during the remainder of the week.

Review, further application, and conclusion:

⁴ Kistemaker, Simon. *New Testament Commentary: James*, p. 124

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In [*A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*](#) (3rd ed., p. 371). University of Chicago Press.