

Sunday Morning Message

December 5, 2021

Putting Your Faith to Work – Study of The General Epistle of James

Eight Characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom

Text – James 3:13 - 18

Congregational Reading – James 3:13 - 18

Introduction

We have been taking our time going through this General Epistle of James, which was the earliest New Testament Book, originally written to a predominantly Jewish Church; but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, it was also intended for a much broader audience – Jew and Gentile alike - and designed to be applicable for many generations to come, including the time that we are in right now.

James is a very practical Book, which shows very plainly and bluntly how God's people should behave themselves. Back in chapter one, we examined two kinds of temptation and the wisdom that's available to us in order to overcome them. We also studied about the Word of God, and the fact that we need to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.

There are two key verses in chapter one which revealed three tests that the Bible gives for people who truly belong to God. James is talking about people who really know God, and whose lives are truly being influenced by the Word of God. People who have real religion, not just people who have go through some sort of external ritual or ceremony, should be able to pass these three tests at least most of the time.:

"(26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:26-27)

Basically what James was saying is that true religion, which comes from a real relationship with Jesus Christ will impact your life in three ways:

1. It will cause you to control your tongue.
2. It will cause you to care about those who are less fortunate than yourself.
3. It will cause you to live a separated life.

Chapter two of James further developed that second test regarding how we treat others who are less fortunate than ourselves. James states that God's people should be impartial regarding the treatment of others. It does not matter if the person is rich or poor, cultured or uncultured, educated or illiterate, from the same race or a different race – everyone is equal in the sight of God, and should all be treated equally within the church.

Chapter two drove home the theme of the Letter – Faith without Works is Dead. Our faith needs to impact the way we live and treat other people.

In the first twelve verses of chapter three James drove home the fact that we need to get control of our tongues. The subject of the tongue is dealt with extensively in the Scripture, but chapter three of James' Letter is by far the most comprehensive passage in the Scripture dealing with the words that we say to each other.

Transition

In these last six verses of chapter three, James will expand on the subject of wisdom, which he introduced back in chapter one:

"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." (James 1:5)

There, James explained where we can find wisdom and how we can get it. Here, in chapter three, James will tell us what heavenly wisdom is like and also what it is not like. There is such a thing as worldly wisdom:

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ... Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:4-8, 13 KJV)

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." (1 Corinthians 3:19)

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." (2 Corinthians 1:12)

Note - today's message will be a word study.

I. The Conversation of Wisdom (v. 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 3:13)*

"endued with knowledge" - ἐπιστήμων – epistēmōn (adjective) – intelligent, experienced, one having the knowledge of an expert.

"shew" - δειξάτω from δεικνύω – deiknyō (Aor Act Imp 3rd Per Sing) – to give evidence or proof of a thing.

"conversation" - ἀναστροφῆς from ἀναστροφή - anastrophe (Noun Gen Sing Fem) – manner of life, conduct, behavior

"meekness" - πραῦτητι from πραῦτης – prautēs (Noun Dat Sing Fem) – mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21)

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Peter 3:15)

Jesus was meek:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

"But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11)

"For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:4)

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Peter tells us that women should be adorned with meekness:

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4)

II. The Contrast of Worldly Wisdom (vs. 14 – 16)

In verses 14 – 16, James will tell us what the wrong kind of wisdom looks like:

*"But if ye have **bitter envying** and **strife** in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is **earthly, sensual, devilish**. For where **envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.**" (James 3:14-16)*

"bitter" - πικρὸν from πικρός – *pikros* (Adj Acc Sing Masc) – bitter, sharp, pungent, piercing, acrid; used previously in James to speak of undrinkable water (James 3:11)

"envying" - ζῆλον from ζῆλος – *zēlos* (Noun Acc Sing Masc) – zeal; can mean rivalry or jealousy, selfish ambition; it can also mean excitement of mind, indignation, passion, or zeal.

Wiersbe: "Is our zeal for the Lord spiritual or carnal? Do we rejoice when others succeed, or do we have secret envy and criticism? Do we feel burdened when others fail, or are we glad? When the wisdom of the world gets into the church, there is a great deal of fleshly promotion and human glorification. Beware!"¹

There is a fine line between a zeal for the Lord, and a passion for promoting yourself.

"strife" – ἐριθείαν from ἐριθεία – *eritheia* (Noun Acc Sing Masc) – a desire to put one's self forward like a politician trying to get supporters; argumentative; winning at all costs. This was the same problem that the church in Corinth had:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 364.

*"Let nothing be done through **strife** or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Philippians 2:3)

"glory" - κατακαυχᾶσθε from κατακαυχάομαι – *katakauchaomai* (Vb Pres Mid or Pas Dep 2nd Per Sing) – to boast

Bitter envying and strife; boasting – these all indicate pride. God hates pride. James tells us that where there is *bitter envying and strife*, there is evidence of a wisdom that is earthy (ἐπίγειος – *epigeios*), sensual (ψυχικός – *psychikos*), and devilish (δαμονιώδης – *daimoniōdēs*). It comes, not from God, but from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

This kind of bitter envying and strife happens all of the time, even within the local church. Remember in Acts 6, there was a strife between the Grecian Jews and the Jews from Judaea over the distribution of food. That is why the Apostles chose seven men who were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom to handle these type of problems.

Notice in verse 16 – where bitter envying and strife; and boasting are, there is: *"confusion"* - ἀκαταστασία from ἀκαταστασία – *akatastasia* (Noun Nom Sing Fem) – tumult, commotion, disturbance, war

"every evil work" - πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα (*pas phaulon pragma*) – meaning all kinds of bad stuff happens when there is bitter envying and strife; and boasting.

III. The Characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom (vs. 17 – 18)

*"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. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."* (James 3:17-18)

1. *"pure"* – ἀγνή from ἀγνός - *hagnos* (Adj Nom Sing Fem) – chaste, clean, free from carnality – Godly wisdom will be clear, pure, and unmixed with the wisdom from the world.
2. *"peaceable"* – εἰρηνική from εἰρηνικός – *eirēnikos* (Adj Nom Sing Fem) – Godly wisdom will not bring strife or cause division; it will be a source of peace.
3. *"gentle"* – ἐπιεικής – *epieikēs* (same as above) – equitable, fair
4. *"easy to be intreated"* – εύπειθής – *eupeithēs* (Adj Nom Sing Masc) reasonable and easy to be obeyed; it won't be something that is hard for you to do:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

5. *"full of mercy"* – ἐλέους from ἔλεος – *eleos* (Noun Gen Sing Neut) kindness or good will – this goes along with what James said in chapter one. When we ask for wisdom, God will not upbraid us. God's wisdom is merciful. It will always provide a solution that will ultimately make the situation better.
6. *"full of good fruits"* – καρπῶν (Noun Gen Plur Masc) ἀγαθῶν (Adj Gen Plur Masc) – the end result, or the fruits, of godly wisdom will be good; it will be beneficial.
7. *"without partiality"* – ἀδιάκριτος from ἀδιάκριτος – *adiakritos* (Adj Nom Sing Fem) – back in chapter two we learned about partiality. Here is has the idea of crystal clear and not at all ambiguous; not double-minded. No doubt about what should be done.
8. *"without hypocrisy"* – ἀνυπόκριτος from ἀνυπόκριτος - *anypokritos* (Adj Nom Sing Fem) – undisguised; clear on the surface; sincere; genuine

That last statement in verse 18 simply means that "peacemakers" will sow peace, meaning that they will bring with them seeds of peace, which will yield a harvest of righteous fruits. Good things will come about when we sow peace.

This is the opposite of what the wrath of man will produce:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

Conclusion

I think the picture becomes very clear when we carefully examine these verses. The person that is exhibiting godly wisdom will be filled with the Spirit if God will manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:22-26)