

## Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Road Map  
Pastor Roger W. Huffman

James 3:13-18  
September 19, 2021

### Test your wisdom to see if it is truly wise.

- ❖ Stop and recall a time when you fell on your knees and pleaded to the Lord for wisdom.
  - Let me guess: it was a time when you didn't know which way to turn - it called for a decision that seemed way above your pay grade. *Lord, you know what is wise.*
  - James briefly spoke about wisdom at the beginning of this letter.
    - ◆ <sup>2</sup> *Consider it complete joy, my brothers, whenever you fall into various kinds of trials, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces patient endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let patient endurance finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
    - ◆ <sup>5</sup> *If any one of you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask God, who gives it to all without reservation and without finding fault, and it will be given to him.* EHV
  - Now here in chapter 3 James returns to teach us to ask for wisdom.
    - ◆ Many who think they are wise are in fact arrogant fools.
    - ◆ James provides a test for true wisdom. Christian, ...

### Test your wisdom to see if it is truly wise.

- ❖ What is wisdom?
  - *the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment* - Oxford Language
    - ◆ It's not intelligence or even knowledge alone. It is rightly applied knowledge
  - Wisdom from God calls for:
    - ◆ **knowledge** of his revealed truths
    - ◆ **understanding** and discernment of these truths and their correlation
    - ◆ **applying** these in ways that prove **beneficial** in the end - promotes eternal life
    - ◆ Wisdom is revealed by the final outcome. Hell reveals many *wise men* to be fools.
- ❖ A test for false wisdom
  - *Let them show [their wisdom and understanding] by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.*
  - Since wisdom is truth rightly applied, wisdom produces fruits of wisdom.
  - Marks of a fool: a heart that *harbors bitter envy and selfish ambition*
    - ◆ Exposed in what is produced: <sup>16</sup> *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.* The results benefit no one.
    - ◆ <sup>15</sup> *Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* Satan loves chaos, death and destruction. Not good! Not wise!
- ❖ False wisdom is full of *bitter envy and selfish ambition*
  - *bitter envy* accuses the Father of not being fair and good in giving his gifts
    - ◆ It **doesn't trust** God's wisdom and love. It considers the Father incompetent.
    - ◆ Bitterness **destroys love** for God. It short-circuits thanksgiving and contentment.
    - ◆ It **destroys care** for the one who has what you want. Blaming them for your envy.
    - ◆ Do you **harbor bitter envy** - your life isn't what you wanted/expected?
      - Be wise and recognize this is not good - not compatible with eternal life.

- ***selfish ambition***: a strong drive for personal success without moral inhibition Logos
  - ◆ It uses knowledge, experience, and understanding to advance self
  - ◆ It looks like *wisdom* and often achieves short-term *success*.
  - ◆ It makes *me* and *what I want* my god - my good - my mission - my purpose
  - ◆ It is so absorbed with self and this life it misses the end - dying, death, & eternity
    - having foolishly separated self from God - the fool's eternity: separated from good
    - Such a strong drive, no matter how *successful* now, is not wise, but pure folly!
- ❖ True wisdom is evident now as well as in eternity.
  - <sup>17</sup> ***But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.***
  - <sup>18</sup> ***Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.***
  - Consider the state of the heart filled with this vs. bitterness. It's wise to pursue!
  - What a blessing to bring these gifts to our communities
    - ◆ Leading people to see a wise alternative to ***disorder and every evil practice***
    - ◆ While some will see the outward wisdom of such behavior and try to imitate it without knowing Jesus and the Bible, *bitter envy and selfish ambition* often arise when their idealism and *trust in the goodness of people* is disappointed.
  - The wise see this wisdom comes exclusively from heaven - from God himself.
    - ◆ It comes through God's Word that makes us wise, enlightening with faith.
    - ◆ The eyes of faith **get** God's wisdom, **gain** understanding, and **experience** wisdom as his word is lived and put into action.
    - ◆ Unlike sin, that neither loves, trusts, or respects God, faith wisely does all three!
    - ◆ Faith is convinced that sin is bad and God is always good - the ultimate good.
      - Faith's wisdom longs for ***pure*** thoughts, speech, actions, relationships
      - It **loves concord** in a community and knows how God produces it:
        - genuine care for the good of others - ***considerate, submissive*** (not me first), a heart of active ***mercy*** for those in need (having experienced God's mercy daily), being ***impartial*** to all (as God is to us), ***sincere*** (not fake or shallow)
        - through wisdom that flows from the humility of knowing my sins, repenting, and knowing God's love, mercy, and peace. The wise **live to serve the Lord**.
    - ◆ James is writing to a Jewish audience for whom ***peace*** = wholeness, health
      - ***Peacemakers*** do not seek peace through compromise at all cost.
        - It is not wise to let worldly *wisdom* set the agenda. False wisdom = false peace
      - The ***peace*** we **sow** needs to flow from the gospel, sharing Jesus, the source of our wisdom. It's more than surface wisdom. It sows the wisdom of God's Word.
      - Only a gospel witness (not forcing the 10 Commandments down people's throats) can produce God's harvest of righteousness to Satan's complete dismay.
      - A life of wisdom calls for humble submission to God's word that makes us whole.

### **Test your wisdom to see if it is truly wise.**

- Then pray for God's wisdom and ***the humility that comes from wisdom***. That's the wisdom that never disappoints. Not now. Not in eternity.