

James 3:13-18 Two Kinds of Wisdom

1. Main thought of James...false vs true faith
 - a. Deeply concerned about the conduct and thinking of his brethren
 - i. Response to trial
 - ii. Response to the Word
 - iii. Their partiality and lack of love
 - iv. Their careless and ungodly speech (Nate's sermon)
 - v. Their desires
 - vi. Their pride
 - b. Led to a general concern about the reality of their faith
 1. So he writes about the fruits of true faith
 - a. Endurance
 - b. Humility
 - c. Controlled tongue (Nate, last week)
 - d. Love
 - e. Godly desires and godly conduct
 - f. Prayer
 - g. Wisdom, which leads us to...
2. Main text for this morning contrasts earthly and heavenly wisdom
 - a. *"13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 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."*
 - i. What is "wisdom"? (good or bad...we all have a "wisdom" unique to us)
 1. Wisdom is directly related to our view of God, our view of man, and our understanding of the universe in which we live.
 2. It is how we live out the knowledge and experience we gather through the course of life; and the application of that knowledge and experience
 - a. Quality of our wisdom results from the quality of our knowledge and experience

- i. Debt, relationships,
- b. It directly affects our philosophy and understanding of life
 - i. Defines what is important
 - ii. Defines the acceptable means of attaining it
 - iii. While we all have a very individual “wisdom”, we also understand that systems of wisdom exist outside of ourselves; James addresses this
- ii. Two kinds of wisdom; earthly (false) and heavenly (true)
 - 1. Characteristics of earthly wisdom (based on earthly understanding; looking out for #1)
 - a. Bitterly jealous
 - i. A sharp, piercing sense of wanting what someone else has
 - 1. Belief life is a zero sum game; victim mentality
 - 2. Entitlement mentality; “I deserve”
 - b. Selfish ambition; *eritheia*; maneuvering to put yourself first
 - i. Political election example
 - ii. Rom 2:8 describes those who practice *eritheia*; selfish ambition
 - 1. “those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,
 - a. Selfish ambition leads away from truth and toward unrighteousness
 - c. Self delusion and lying
 - i. *Pseudomai*; middle voice. Lying to self
 - 1. false claim to wisdom and understanding
 - d. Arrogant
 - i. Also middle voice; delusional self righteousness
 - 1. Not telling others how great I am...but telling self
 - e. “natural”; stems from a “natural” unredeemed world view
 - i. *1 Cor 2:14* “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
 - f. Demonic; the same wisdom characteristic of demons
 - i. prideful

1. *Is 14:12 “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13 “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”*

g. creates disorder and evil

i. “disorder”; confusion, commotion. Looks to James next words in 4:1

1. *“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? “*

ii. “evil”; *phaulos*, not *kakos* or *pornos*. Emphasis is worthless, of no value. Worldly wisdom doesn’t work!

h. all stem from a preoccupation with self; overvaluing our importance; striving after selfish pursuits and goals

2. Quotes from earthly wisdom

a. “There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.”

— **Harold Pinter** Nobel prize winning playwright, director, actor

b. “I believe that there are no innate, intrinsic differences among a human being , a baboon or a grain of sand.” — **Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.** Supreme Court Justice

c. A healthy self-love means we have no compulsion to justify to ourselves or others why we take vacations, why we sleep late, why we buy new shoes, why we spoil ourselves from time to time. We feel comfortable doing things which add quality and beauty to life.”— **Andrew Matthews** Bestselling author and international speaker

d. “We keep on being told that religion, whatever its imperfections, at least instills morality. On every side, there is conclusive evidence that the contrary is the case and that faith causes people to be more mean, more selfish, and perhaps above all, more stupid.”

— **Christopher Hitchens** outspoken atheist, author, speaker, journalist

e. YOLO

i. Not used to be thoughtful, but reckless

3. Quotes from heavenly wisdom

a. *Rom 12:14ff “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” -Paul*

b. *Matt 20:25ff “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” -Jesus*

c. *Prov 6:20ff “My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; 21 Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. 22 When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you.” -Solomon*

4. James 3:17 Characteristics of heavenly wisdom

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

i. “pure”; pure from every fault; immaculate.

1. Contrast with “evil” above... faultless vs worthless
2. “first” pure; dominant characteristic. It is reliable, without error or failing... sufficient
3. Moral component; it reflects the character of God, not man

- ii. “peaceable”; contrast with “disorder” of earthly wisdom. Leads to relational harmony; peace; tranquility
 - iii. “gentle”; not mild or meek per se, we do not have a good English equivalent
 - 1. MacArthur, “It is the lovely attribute of redeemed character and godly wisdom that is humbly patient, that is steadfastly gentle, that submits to dishonor, disgrace, mistreatment, persecution with an attitude of humility, an attitude of courteousness, an attitude of kindness, an attitude of patience, an attitude of consideration, without hatred, without malice, without revenge.”
 - 2. Aristotle, “Justice better than justice”
 - iv. “reasonable”; amenable, readily persuaded, teachable; not stubborn or resistant to correction or counsel
 - v. “full of mercy and good fruits”
 - 1. “Mercy”; kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them”
 - a. Resulting in “good fruits”... those “acts of help”
 - vi. “unwavering”; a steadfast confidence and knowledge in what is right and proper. Not “double minded” or changeable
 - vii. “without hypocrisy”; genuine, sincere... not two faced.
Closely connected to “unwavering”
5. Contrast between earthly and heavenly wisdom recap
- a. Earthly wisdom
 - i. self focused, arrogant, self deceptive, destructive
 - b. Heavenly wisdom
 - i. Pure, harmonious, merciful, sincere, thoughtful

Beloved, we have been talking about, and contrasting, two kinds of wisdom this morning; earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom... false wisdom and true wisdom. And James calls us to make a choice between them... a choice that is reflective of the quality and character of our faith. But please understand something... when we choose, it is rarely a choice of a moment whether to embrace worldly or heavenly wisdom. But, rather, we are drawn to, or fall into,

worldly or heavenly wisdom through much smaller choices... what we read, what we listen to, what we watch, with whom we associate and the content of that association, how we choose to act and think in small, seemingly insignificant, ways.

Remember what we said about the nature of wisdom... the quality of our wisdom results from the quality of our knowledge and experience. We are always being “programmed”... or programming ourselves... to think and believe certain ways; ways which directly affect our understanding and practice of wisdom. This is why Paul, in writing to the Corinthians says, “we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”. And later to the Philippians, in 4:6, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”* We are to guard our hearts and minds through trusting prayer and godly focus. Listen to the words of the Psalmist in Ps 119:9ff, *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. 10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. 11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”*

Well, I am ready to close but I see we have one verse left from our passage this morning. It says, *“And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”* What is James saying here? Simply this... that as the fruit of true wisdom is sown by the practitioners of wisdom... those who make peace and practice peace... it brings forth additional fruit as it takes root and matures. And what is that fruit? It is fruit unto sanctification in the lives of the faithful and fruit unto salvation in the lives of the lost. May we be those who sow the fruit of righteousness as we live out lives of godly wisdom.

Let us pray.