



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Living in Wisdom

James 3:13-18

Message #7 of 12 – S664

Sermon given on November 22, 2015



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Living in Wisdom

James 3:13-18

Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 3**
- Today, we continue our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- We are going to jump right into our text today
- If you are able and willing to do so, please stand as we read today's text as a sign of reverence for God's Word
- Read **James 3:13-18**
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Living in Wisdom**
- Last time James told us that our tongues can get us into great trouble
- That's not news to most people, but James wants us all to realize this is not a problem one person has, all people struggle with controlling what comes out of their mouth
- One moment we are blessing God and the next we are cursing people made in the image of God
- Says it shouldn't be like that, especially in the church
- Instead our lives and words ought to be marked by something else
- **James 3:13a**
- 'Who is...' or how can you tell who is wise and understanding among you
- The Bible talks a lot about wisdom and understanding **Proverbs 4:7** **Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.**
- It is something to be sought after and once attained, it is to be treasured
- But where is it to be found? Job asked that same question **Job 28:12-13, 20-21**

But where can wisdom be found? And where *is* the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living... From where

then does wisdom come? And where *is* the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air.

- Job seems to suggest that it is very hard to find
- And as I look around this world and the at the people who are leading in this world, I think I agree with Job
- There are some very intelligent people in this world
- In fact, the rate of increase in knowledge in this world is mind-blowing
- But knowledge does not guarantee wisdom and understanding
- The Apostle Paul said that knowledge puffs up, it builds up pride, build it does not necessarily build up people
- James wants us to look around for wise and understanding people
- And in this message James is going to say three things about wisdom
- First the evidence of wisdom and then two types of wisdom
- First point – **The Evidence of Wisdom**
- **James 3:13b**
- If we are walking in wisdom there will be visible evidence
- And James describes it three ways
- First – **Good Conduct**
- This speaks of his character – that means you can't be doing wicked things and be wise
- Second – **His Works**
- His character and works line up – he is not a hypocrite
- And the one that disqualifies most from the description of being wise
- Third – **Meekness of Wisdom**
- To the self-seeking in verse 14 meekness = weakness
- In their minds, you need to assert yourself, push yourself to the front, even if it means stepping on others to get what you want
- Jesus thought otherwise **Matthew 11:28-29**
Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- 'lowly in heart' = meek
- Meekness is not weakness = strength under control
- Jesus also said the meek would inherit the earth

- True wisdom is seen in men and women of godly character whose works match their character and words and displayed in meekness
 - Now, depending on what you see from a person's life, you will be able to identify which of two types of wisdom they have
 - Point 2 – **Wisdom Not From Above**
 - **James 3:14-15**
 - The two types of wisdom are the wisdom that comes from above and the wisdom that does not
 - He then tells us about the three sources of wisdom not from above
 - First – **Earthly**
 - This is worldly wisdom – this is the wisdom that the world agrees to
 - Everyone else is doing it, so it must be right
 - Colorado legalized pot, so California should to
 - On Tuesday Whoopi Goldberg said that Hitler was a Christian
 - Her reasoning was that because Hitler hated the Catholics, that he was a Christian
 - My Bible suggests that there are other qualifications for calling yourself a Christian, not the least of which is believing in Christ and loving others
 - I've read the whole Bible and can't find a single suggest that Christians should hate Catholics
 - Whoopi does not have wisdom from above – she has earthly wisdom
 - James is going to tell us in the next chapter that the world's wisdom creates a problem for us **James 4:4**
- Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**
- You can't call yourself a friend of God and follow the wisdom of the world
 - Second source of wisdom not from above – **Sensual**
 - This is the flesh – this is wisdom that satisfies our desires
 - It makes me happy or it makes me feel good, so it must be right and good for me
 - Gay marriage should be legalized because they just want to be happy, or so that they're not alone

- That is not wisdom from above – it is sensual, of the flesh
 - Third source – **Demonic**
 - This comes right from the dark heart of Satan
 - Like: a woman has a right to choose what happens to her body – it is right to terminate an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy
 - That is not wisdom from above – it is demonic
 - Then James tells us what the outcome of wisdom not from above is
 - **James 3:16**
 - ‘envy’ = being displeased that someone else has something we want
 - ‘self-seeking’ = looking out for ‘numerouno’
 - Ends in confusion – the opposite of peace
 - ‘and every evil thing’ – like James saying so much bad comes from it, I’ll just sum it all up
 - Remember James is talking to the church
 - There might have been bad things going on
 - Some may have been politicking or lobbying for positions, like teachers of the church
 - How do you decide who should lead
 - How do you know which one has wisdom
 - The kind of wisdom that doesn’t end in confusion and every evil thing
 - Do you pick the experienced politician, or the businessman with the fifties-style pompadour, or the brain surgeon
 - Earthly, sensual, or demonic wisdom will not help us
 - James says we need to look for another kind of wisdom
 - Third point is **Wisdom from Above**
 - **James 3:17**
 - Job asked where wisdom can be found – he answered his own question **Job 28:23-28**
- God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt, then He saw *wisdom* and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, and to depart from evil *is* understanding.’**
- I don’t know about you, but I regularly need wisdom from above

- I know the world has no answers for me, and I don't trust my flesh as far as I can throw it, and I want nothing to do with anything Satan has to offer

- I need something I don't have, wisdom from above, how do I get it

- James already told us **James 1:5-6**

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

- But when I ask, how do I know if God has answered my prayer for wisdom?

- I compare what I think God told me to this list of 7 characteristics of wisdom from above; pure, peaceable, gentle...

- This is also true when we get counsel from other people

- Suppose I go to someone and tell them that I have having a problem with my wife, she doesn't fold my laundry the way I want her to

- And after listening to me, He says 'You shouldn't have to put up with that, you should send her to her mother's until she learns how to fold your laundry'

- Is that wisdom from above or from below?

- Look at the characteristics – is it pure? Is it peaceable, is it gentle – fail, fail, epic fail = wisdom from below

- Let's go back and read verse 13, because there is an interesting connection between verses 13 and 17

- **James 3:13**

- 'who is wise...' – telling them to look for evidence of wisdom

- And then back in verse 17 describes the characteristics of wisdom

- Not only is James describing what godly wisdom looks like, he is also describing the character traits of people who are wise and understanding

- Not only do I need and want godly wisdom and understanding, I want to be wise and understanding

- With this list, I have a checklist of things that I can work on to become wise and understanding

- And notice there is not an explicit mention of growing in knowledge

- It is not just about knowing more about God and the Bible
 - I need the Holy Spirit to take what I know and help me to be more pure, more peaceable, more gentle...
 - I don't need to know more, I need to do more with what I already know
 - And as I do, more and more wisdom from above will flow into and through my life
 - And this is not just for me, because I am the pastor of the church
 - It is for anyone who needs wisdom from above and wants to be wise and understanding
 - Would like to touch on verse 18
 - It is kind of an odd verse here – looks like it might fit better in chapter 4
 - **James 3:18**
 - 'fruit of righteousness' is likely these 7 characteristics of wisdom from above
 - The sense then is if you grow in those characteristics, you will grow in practical righteousness and peace will be the byproduct of that righteousness
 - We are surrounded by people, organizations, and governments trying to feed us their wisdom from below
 - And then we have our own flesh telling us what is right
 - And Satan is whispering in our ear
 - We need real godly wisdom from above
 - And it is available to anyone who will ask
 - And if you don't get an answer right away, look for someone who is living out that wisdom in their life
 - James will tell us next time that we have not, because we ask not
 - God loves you and He wants to give you what you need – ask Him
 - Amen
 - **Pray**
- May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.**

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

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