

Wisdom of this Word VS Wisdom from Above Pleasant Plains 3-5-2017AM NICK ANGEL

- ***Read James 3:13-18/Prayer*** As the inspired writer James continues his letter that focuses on living a life of godliness, we ought to notice that everything he discusses comes down to a simple word: choice. This life is all about choices. The opening verses show us that there is one of two ways that we can handle the difficulties of this life. We can either shrink under their pressure and quit when things get difficult, or we can choose to consider it joy that through our struggles can come forth a strong faith. All throughout this book the message is consistent...choose what you will do.
- Once we arrive at chapter 3, that message is focused specifically on those who would desire to teach. He gives strong warning that those who desire to teach must be sure that they do so well because their is great responsibility in leading the minds of others. He points out the importance of our words and the weight that they carry. Then following this, he brings it back again to those who would want to teach.
- It is logical that those who would teach would be those who possess and display good wisdom in their lives. Notice that I said "good" wisdom, for there is wisdom that is not good. Remember that wisdom is simply knowledge and understanding put into action. Therefore, it might be that the knowledge and understanding that we possess and live by isn't good, but it is actually skewed or tainted in some way. This ought not be the type of wisdom we strive for. Instead, we must make the choice to embrace, come to know, and live by the proper and right type of wisdom that is not of this world, but that is from above.
- This morning, we are going to dissect this text here in **James 3:13-18** and come to recognized the differences between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom that is from above. My hope is that we will see the very distinct differences between the two different wisdoms. As teachers or not as teachers, our God desires that we live wisely so that we glorify His Name in this life and reap the benefits of wise living. **(Eph. 5:15)** Let's see what we realize when we contrast the wisdom of this world with the wisdom that comes from above.

I. Wisdom of this World (vv.14-16)

A. Focuses on Self (v.14)

1. Notice the attributes that are mentioned in **v.14**. Bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrogance. Each of these gives way to thoughts that the person who possesses the wisdom of this world is truly only focused on himself. This does nothing good for the person who seeks to teach and lead.
2. **The bitterly jealous person wants all of the attention on himself.** Especially when it comes to teachers, bitter jealousy has no place in that person's heart. The bitterly jealous person will do what he does simply for self glorification and not the betterment of others.
3. **The person full of selfish ambition only does those things that will help himself to advance towards whatever he has his eyes set upon.** His concern is not for others, but he will do whatever it takes, even hurting others, for him to meet his own goals.
4. **The arrogant man never even begins to consider whether or not he might be in the wrong** in what he does or the way he approaches his work as a teacher or a leader.
5. While these are certainly terrible attributes of the teacher and leader, we must recognize the harm that these things cause in the life of any individual, leader or not. The claimed disciple of Christ who lives a life in this way is not living as Jesus would and did live, but instead he lives according to the mindset of the ruler of this world, Satan.

B. From Mind of Satan (v.15)

1. Certainly it cannot even be imagined that these types of traits are of the mind of God, but truly they are of the mind of Satan himself. He is often described as being of this world, natural in his thoughts, and demonic in his actions.
2. Those who live according to his "earthly" wisdom live in such a way that it is apparent that success in this world and live is all that truly matters to them. There is no care or concern for the life coming after this one, but the here and now is the only thing on his mind. How can I get mine and enjoy it in the here and now for that is all that truly matters.
3. The one who lives according to this "natural" wisdom of Satan doesn't consider the desires of the One who created him in His own image, the image of the God of heaven. Again, the focus is only on himself and no one else. If his desires are all that matters to him, then why consider the desires of someone that he has never seen or heard from? Truly as Paul says those focused on the natural or he flesh are contrary to the Spirit of God. **(Gal. 5:17)**
4. Truly the wisdom of Satan leads us to behave like Satan himself so it is no surprise that this wisdom would be described as "demonic." Just as Satan's desire is only for himself, it makes complete sense that those who follow in his footsteps would only do that with they desire.
5. It might seem appalling that anyone who desired to be a teacher of God's Word would ever behave in such a way as is described, but it was and continues to be an issue among those who lead those who seek after God. They only do so for the glory. They only do so for the gain. They only teach those things that will bring the numbers. They only do these things so that they themselves will prosper. However, is prosperity truly in their future? James doesn't seem to think so.

C. Results in Disorder and Problems (v.16)

1. Those who operate in this way surely think that their selfish and wicked efforts will result in their gain, but the reality is that their actions only result in further disorder and problems in their lives.
2. There is not "if" involved in this discussion. James is very matter of the fact that when these things exist, when there is jealous and selfish ambition, then there will be disorder and evil results.

3. There will be a constant sense of upheaval and disfunction. Others will see through the facade of our actions and will call us down from our selfish attitude and actions. In any type of group this would be the case, much less in a church setting where we are to be serving for the benefit of others.
4. When each person seeks after their own desires then there will never be peace, but surely every evil thing will be present. Confusion, arguments, and tension will be common place among a group of people who seek after their own selfish desires.
5. Wisdom ought to help us be more successful in this life, but I think it is pretty obvious to see that relying on the wisdom of this world doesn't help our lives, but it instead makes them much worse.

II. Wisdom from Above (vv.17,18)

A. Focuses on Love for Others (v.17)

1. Whereas the wisdom of this world focuses on self, comes from Satan, and causes problems...the wisdom from above does the exact opposite. Wisdom from above is rooted in humility and love for others. The "gentleness of wisdom" is on full display in the person who seeks wisdom from above.
2. **This wisdom first moves us to be pure in our motives.** Purity of motives certainly isn't something that can be said of the person who focuses on self. Thus, if we want to focus on others then we must possess a pure mindset. Purity, integrity, and honesty are traits that drive the heart of the person seeking heavenly wisdom.
3. The person with selfish ambition seeks his own good regardless of the costs, but the person living by the wisdom from above **seeks to be at peace with his fellow man.** It might be that peace can be had if we don't push our own agenda or desires on others when we don't have to. If we love others and want peace then we ought to sacrifice our preferences for the better good.
4. **To be gentle and reasonable are defining traits of the one who lives according to wisdom from above.** Those who are gentle and reasonable are willing to consider and work with others in order to find the truth in whatever matter it is that is discussed. This stands in stark contrasts to the one who is arrogant and is unwilling to even consider that he might be wrong in any particular matter.
5. Also consider that the wisdom from above is seen in **a person who is full of mercy and good fruits.** This person is not willing to take advantage of the shortcomings of others in order to make gain for himself, but he seeks the good for all others out of his love for them.
6. Finally, **the person who is focused on his love for others is unwavering and free of hypocrisy.** He is convicted of what is right and wrong based upon the wisdom from above. He is not willing to play situational ethics when the need arises to help himself, but he instead holds fast to that which he preaches and teaches to others. He is convinced of his faith and stands by it even to his loss.

B. From Mind of God (v.17)

1. Where can this type of wisdom come from? We know this wisdom is not of this world, but James says that it originates from above. This type of wisdom that results in righteousness is born from a seed and that seed is the Bible which is the Word of God.
2. The traits are the result of a life that is led by the Spirit of God. Certainly the fruits of the Spirit found in **Galatians 5:22-26**. Two letters written by two different authors, yet the message is clear and consistent with one another. This is because the source of both messages is God.

C. Results in Righteousness and Peace (v.18)

1. So what happens when we display traits that focus on others and we know and practice a wisdom that is from the almighty God of heaven? We get to experience righteousness and peace in our lives as opposed to living lives that are full of strife and discord.
2. The only way to live a life of righteousness is to do everything with pure motives and a love for God and others. Any other motives or objectives will only lead us to ruin.
3. Having a peaceful life with others will only be had if they recognize our pure intentions and our care for them and their well being. When others see that we genuinely care for them, then that care will often be reciprocated back towards us. Any failure on our part...either failing to genuinely care or failing to act upon our love for others will cause peace to be impossible.
4. This means that we must be active in our striving for righteousness and peace. Notice that the seed must be sown. We must put forth the effort to not just know wisdom but to implement the wisdom of God in our lives. In doing this and avoiding the wisdom of this world, we will be blessed and those around us will be equally benefitted.

Regardless of the role we fulfill in this life...whether as a teacher or not...God expects for us to know and live according to the wisdom that comes from His all knowing mind. There might be times when we feel as if nothing is going our way. There might be discord and every problem imaginable in our lives. It might be that we need to consider whether or not we are living according to the wisdom that comes from above. If we're not, then we need to put forth the effort to recognize that God's way is the best way. We need to recognize that loving others will lead to peace in our lives. We must give effort to recognize the better way and that better way is living according to wisdom from above. May God help us to live wisely and may each and every one of us experience the blessings of living according to the wisdom that is from above.