

James 3:13-18
Pursue God's Wisdom

Introduction: This is the focal point of James' letter. Wisdom is the skill for living and applying God's Word to your everyday life. (MBC)

1) I need to obey the exhortation to demonstrate Godward wisdom—3:13

- a) Stop and think (rhetorical question): ¹³ *Who is wise [sofo,j] and understanding [evpisth,mwn] among you?*
 - i) James gets even more practical and personal.
 - ii) This is a familiar pairing in the LXX
 - (1) Generally: Deut. 1:13, 15; 4:6
 - (2) Specifically: Dan. 1:4; 5:11
- b) Demonstrate wisdom: *By [evk] his good [kalo,j] conduct/behavior [avnastrofh,] let him show/demonstrate (cf. 2:18) his works/actions in [evn] the meekness/gentleness [prau/thj] (kindheartedness, even-tempered selflessness) of wisdom [sofi,a].*
 - i) Wisdom is best demonstrated through actions, not speech. (MBC)
 - ii) "Meekness" is not weakness but rather the concept of a horse that has been broken and is now under control. This trait is condemned by our culture. This is Christlikeness in action (cf. Matt. 11:29)
 - iii) This Christian meekness, or humility, comes from understanding our position as sinful creatures in relationship to the glorious and majestic God It recognizes how unable we are in and of ourselves to achieve spiritual fulfillment or to chart our own course in the world. And this humility before God should then translate into humility toward others. (Douglas Moo)

2) I need to reject anti-wisdom—3:14-16

- a) Exhortation, not a statement of condemnation—3:14
 - i) **If:** ¹⁴ *But [de,] if (1st class condition) you have bitter/harsh jealousy/passionate resentment [pikro,j zh/loj] and selfish ambition/self-oriented and self-advancing party spirit [evriqei,a] in [evn] your hearts,*
 - (1) This is later shown to be true in 4:1-6.
 - ii) **Then:** *do not boast and be false to [kata,] (contradict) the truth [avlh,qeia].*
 - (1) Those full of party spirit and bitter zeal ought at least to be honest and stop claiming to be inspired by God's heavenly wisdom. (Peter Davids)
- b) The source of anti-wisdom: ¹⁵ *This (jealousy and selfish ambition) is not the wisdom [sofi,a] that comes down from above, but [avlla,] is ... (3 adjectives)*
 - i) Inferior, not from heaven: *earthly [evpi,geioj],*
 - (1) Limited by human understanding
 - ii) Natural, not from the Spirit: *unspiritual [yuciko,j], (soulish, selfish)*
 - (1) Limited by human values and characteristics, life apart from God
 - iii) Evil, ultimate origin: *demonic [daimoniw,dhj]. (demon-like)*

- c) The consequences of anti-wisdom: ¹⁶ *For* [ga,r] *where jealousy* [zh/loj] *and selfish ambition/self-oriented party spirit* [evriqei,a] *exist,*
- i) *There/in that place will be disorder/confusion, instability, anarchy* [avkatastasi,a] (cf. 1:8; 3:8) *and every vile/worthless, low moral value, not beneficial* [fau/loj] *practice/undertaking* [pra/gma].
- ii) Remember 1 Cor. 14:33 and John 5:29.

3) I need to embrace God's wisdom—3:17-18

- The virtues James lists are predominantly nonselfish and nonaggressive; those who practice these virtues show greater concern for others than for themselves. (FSB)
 - True wisdom is identified by the quality of life that it produces. (Moo)
 - In a general sense, what Paul claims that the Spirit produces, James claims true wisdom produces. (Moo)
- a) ¹⁷ *But the wisdom* [sofi,a] *from above is ...* (note the alliteration of A's and E's)
- i) Holy: *first (on the one hand) pure* [a'gno,j],
(1) Probably in contrast to the self-oriented mindset
(2) Remember Ps. 19:10
- ii) Wholeness and peace-loving: *then peaceable* [eivrhniko,j],
(1) Cf. Prov. 3:17
- iii) Considerate, non-combative: *gentle* [evpieikh,j],
(1) Not demanding on its own rights or privileges
- iv) Persuadable, accommodating, approachable: *open to reason* [euvpeiqh,j],
(1) The opposite of being stubborn but not weak gullibility
- v) Actively compassionate: *full of mercy* [e'leoj] *and good* [avgaqo,j] *fruits* [karpo,j],
- vi) Unwavering stability: *impartial* [avdia,kritoj]
(1) In contrast to the instability of anti-wisdom (Dan McCartney)
- vii) Unhypocritical: *and sincere* [avnupo,kritoj].
(1) The same transparency in private as in public.
- b) ¹⁸ *And (on the other hand) a harvest* [karpo,j] *of righteousness is sown in* [evn] *peace by those who make/work for* [poie,w] *peace.* (cf. Matt. 5:9)
- i) Peace stands in contrast to the disorder and every vile practice. (3:16)
- ii) Peacemakers accurately reflect the image of God (cf. Phil. 4:7, 9)
- iii) This righteousness cannot be produced in the context of human anger (1:20) or bitterness and self-seeking (3:14); but it *can* grow and flourish in the atmosphere of peace. (combine Burdick and Moo)

4) Things I need to remember:

- a) In a culture filled with anti-peace, we have the opportunity to demonstrate genuine, Godward peace/wholeness and harmony.
- b) The time has come to choose between genuine wisdom and anti-wisdom.