

James 3:13-18

“Wise Guy”

I. Where is the Wise Man? (Verse 13)

A. **V. 13 “Who is the Wise and Understanding Among You”**

B. **Automaker Henry Ford asked electrical genius Charlie Steinmetz to build the generators for his factory. One day the generators ground to a halt, and the repairmen couldn't find the problem. So Ford called Steinmetz, who tinkered with the machines for a few hours and then threw the switch. The generators whirred to life--but Ford got a bill for \$10,000 from Steinmetz. Flabbergasted, the rather tightfisted car maker inquired why the bill was so high. Steinmetz's reply: For tinkering with the generators, \$10. For knowing where to tinker, \$9,990. Ford paid the bill.**

C. **Wise — A person who knows God’s way of doing things and then does them.** “Wise” and “understanding” together indicate this person is an “expert” in his or her grasp of the Gospel and its application to life.

D. **In the eyes of the world this is every believer in Christ!**

E. **“By his good conduct let him show his works” — *Let such a person reveal himself by his conduct; how he lives his life!***

“Good” is translated from a word which means “beautiful” or “noble.” *So we reveal the true nature of who we are by living a*

beautiful and noble life. True beauty and genuine nobility are found only in Christ and His way of life. The old adage, “The greatest sermon you will ever preach is a life well lived” is absolutely true and James affirms that here.

- F. **“In the Meekness of Wisdom”** — These beautiful and noble works are done in the meekness of wisdom. Whenever you see real wisdom you will always see meekness.
- G. **Meekness** — It is the opposite of arrogance and the self-assertiveness. It is to humbly submit to God and His will for our every situation in life. It enables us to deal in gentleness and patience with others because we know our God is working all things together for our good. He fights our battles. He is the guarantor of His will and purpose for our life.
- H. **So a truly wise person is made evident by how he or she lives a beautiful and noble life of doing things God’s kind of way; a life submitted to God in such a way which enables gentleness and patience with others.**
- I. **Matthew 11:19, “Wisdom is proved right by her actions.”** — Your life actions and attitudes will always prove or expose who you really are. You will live in the wisdom of God or “wisdom” of the devil. Now James prepares to tell us the difference...

I. Two Types of Wisdom: Worldly Wisdom (verses 14-16)

A. V. 14 “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth”

B. Two primary characteristics of worldly wisdom are bitter jealousy and selfish ambition:

C. Bitter Jealousy — The word “bitter” can be translated “resentment.” The word translated here as jealousy means “a fierce desire to promote one’s own opinion to the exclusion of all others.”

D. So someone living in worldly wisdom will demonstrate a harsh resentment of others leading to rabid promotion of their own opinion.

E. Selfish Ambition — Self interest. **A person living life by worldly wisdom will have a devastating self-centeredness.**

F. I gave a little tea party this afternoon, at 3. 'Twas very small, 3 guests in all - I, myself, and me. Myself ate all the sandwiches while I drank all the tea. 'Twas also I who ate the pie and passed the cake to me.

G. In Your Heart — In Jewish thought the center of the whole personality.

H. Heart is used in Scripture as the most comprehensive term for the authentic person. It is the part of our being where we desire, deliberate, and decide. It has been described as "the

place of conscious and decisive spiritual activity," "the comprehensive term for a person as a whole; his feelings, desires, passions, thought, understanding and will," and "the center of a person. The place to which God turns."

- I. **Have you ever wonder how someone can be so selfish, self absorbed and self-centered? Here is your answer! Their heart (center of their whole personality) is filled with satanic wisdom (a way of living which lacks integrity, submission to God or any interest in people other than themselves).**
- J. **“Do Not Boast Or Be False to the Truth”** — If this describes you...If you are filled with bitter jealousy and selfish ambition... don't be proud of it! Isn't this an interesting kind of thing to say? **Why would he ever think to say such a thing?**
- K. **The answer...People living this way often think of their way of living is virtuous.** They are looking out for number one... getting ahead...telling it like it is...winning (at least in their own eyes).
- L. **James says you are not winning your winning!** You should be ashamed, convicted and repent!
- M. **V. 15 “This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic”** — Worldly wisdom does not come from God: it is carnal, worldly and of the devil.

N. The world understand it. The natural man who lives apart from Christ will see the “wisdom” of living such a life. But such thinking contradicts the life and character of God; **promotes a life of rebellion against Him and leads to a shattered life...**

O. V. 16 **“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”**

P. **There will be disorder and every vile practice** — A life governed by worldly, demonic wisdom will lead to confusion, disorder and every kind of vile practice. **To put it another way: It will make your life a living hell filled with all the sin and misery such a place can produce.**

Q. **Such a person’s life is torn apart...a disaster. But the disorder of such a life usually spills over into the lives of those closest to them as well...their family, friends and even the church...**

R. How many times have we seen churches torn apart by those living in a worldly kind of wisdom...those who had fierce desire to promote their own opinion and cared nothing for the opinions of others. Who were completely self absorbed and had a devastating self-centeredness. How many times have the powers of darkness used such a person to wreak havoc upon God’s people?

I. Two Types of Wisdom: Godly Wisdom (verse 17-18)

A. V. 17 “But the wisdom that is from above first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”

B. There is another kind of wisdom. One which is from God. It is...

C. Pure — This is its first and primary quality...It is undefiled and free from self-interest. God is the priority of such wisdom. His way of doing things and His will are what matters.

D. Peaceable — Delights in and promotes peace

E. Gentle — Reasonable and courteous; does not insist on its own way

F. Open to reason — Not obstinate; conciliatory and willing to listen; willing to yield to God and His plans

G. Mercy — Compassion and pity towards the needy

H. Good Fruits — Kind actions and helpful deeds prompted by compassion and mercy

I. Without partiality — Without prejudice of any kind

J. Without hypocrisy — Sincere, genuine and unpretentious

K. You get the picture James is painting. Godly wisdom is focused on God and His way of doing things. It is what we call “righteous living.” It is Spirit led, from heaven and a product

of the Spirit's work inside us as believers in Christ...such a life is one of peace.

L. V. 18 "And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

M. Peace — The tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing, content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is

N. In 1555, Nicholas Ridley was burned at the stake because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of assistance and comfort. Nicholas declined the offer and replied that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life. Because he knew the peace of God, he could rest in the strength of the everlasting arms of his Lord to meet his need. So can we!

O. A Harvest of Righteousness is Sown in Peace — Those who are at peace with God, living in His wisdom, will sow God's kind of life (righteousness) in themselves and those around them.

P. Telemachus was a monk who lived in the 4th century. He felt God saying to him, "Go to Rome." He was in a cloistered monastery. He put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in

the streets. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting and killing each other in the coliseum, the day of the games, the circus. He thought to himself, "Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?" He ran to the coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, "Hail to Ceasar, we die for Ceasar" and he thought, "this isn't right." He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd protested and began to shout, "Run him through, Run him through." A gladiator came over and hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand. He got up and ran back and again said, "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd continued to chant, "Run him through." One gladiator came over and plunged his sword through the little monk's stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood. One last time he gasped out, "In the name of Christ forbear." A hush came over the 80,000 people in the coliseum. Soon a man stood and left, then another and more, and within minutes all 80,000 had emptied out of the arena. It was the last known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome.

I. Conclusion

- A. **Throughout the letter James repeatedly makes the point that who you are...who you really are in the deepest parts of your heart...will come to light in the way you live your life.** He wants us to ask hard questions and be honest with ourselves about who we really are.
- B. James wants us to live lives of integrity. He wants us to know Christ and be a part of what He is doing in the world. A life of love, fellowship, joy and impact.
- C. Are you saved? If you are saved have you given up the world's way of looking at things? The world's wisdom? Are you living in a wisdom from above?