

## Wisdom From Above James 4:6, James 3:13-18

As a kid, did your parents ever put soap in your mouth? I can admit that it once happened to me. It is one of the earliest memories that I have. The sad part is that I cannot remember what I said, but it certainly must not have been good. Mom wanted me to use my mouth better. One never forgets the taste of soap after an experience like that. If you were to do this today, one would probably get charged with abuse.

God has plans and uses for our bodies and members other than what we may choose. **He has given us our reason, senses, eyes, ears, minds, and all our members, mouths included. As we heard last week, God didn't give us a mouth to have both blessings and curses to flow from it. In fact, God gives us our eyes, ears, mouths, minds, and members to receive gifts from Him. In James 1:17, the Apostle says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."**

As James finishes his teachings on the tongue, he tells us about a gift that comes from above, **wisdom. Wisdom is what proceeds from the tongue and the heart. God's wisdom produces right speaking. But what is the wisdom from above, this gift of God, that James tells us about?**

Have you ever just gone into a bookstore just to look around. When Book-A-Million was in Sebring I would go in and look around. Of course, I checked out the Theology section to see if there was anything I would be interested in at the time. But one thing that I did notice was next to the theology books and Bibles was the...**self help** section. It was an interesting interpretation and placement. In the mind of the organizer, it seemed to be a logical placement. They thought they went hand-in-hand, and were not that different. But this couldn't be any farther from the truth.

The wisdom that James is going to tell us about is not some sort of self-help advice. It isn't wisdom about how Christians should behave or act. It is not a wisdom about how to make friends and keep them, or how to get ahead at business and to make some money. It is a wisdom completely different from the self-centered wisdom of the world.

**What James means by wisdom is the understanding of the Gospel, made possible only by the Holy Spirit. But wisdom doesn't just involve the acknowledgment that the Gospel is true, but also the expression of that Gospel in the life of a Christian. It is putting that truth into action.**

To help teach this point, he shows us what the wisdom from above is not. He contrasts it with a worldly wisdom, and tells us what it is marked by. **"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above."** James says that the wisdom of the world is marked by jealousy and selfish ambition, and that can be seen in its actions and behaviors.

Worldly wisdom, according to James, is often marked by jealousy and selfish ambition. **It is not meek or humble. It goes against the truth. It is thoughts and actions that focus on me, and what is best for me. It is self seeking and self serving. It focuses on how to increase my influence and standing, even at the cost of others. It is about how to exert my will and influence to get what I want. The world calls this wise.**

James describes and calls this wisdom for what it really is, though. He says it is earthly, that is, having no living awareness of God and lets its thoughts and behaviors be governed by the world.

We hear it with phrases, **"This is the new norm" or "everybody does that now."** He calls it unspiritual, that is, it directs all concerns of one's soul and life to things this side of Heaven. It is an obsession with the self that has no regard for the spiritual. **James also calls it demonic, that is, under Satan's control and influence. We can see this with the great deception of our age: "It doesn't matter what you do or who you are, what matters is that you are happy! Do what makes you happy!" It is often the logic to do whatever you want!**

And James notes the products of this wisdom. He says, **"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."** We see this with two examples from Genesis.

Cain's jealousy of Abel and his sacrifice led him to killing his brother. The jealousy of Joseph's brothers led them to selling him as a slave and then lying to their father to cover it up!

We can see these devastating effects in our own lives as these things can produce betrayals, encourage lying, lead to theft, promote an unhealthy obsession of self and money, devalue others, or ruin relationships. What a wisdom!

But the wisdom from above is completely different. It is from above! It is a gift from **God. It is understanding the good news by the Holy Spirit that Jesus died and rose for you. But it also the expression of that Gospel in the life of a Christian, which is His work in us. So James describes this wisdom, which is really, a set of attributes.**

James says that this wisdom is pure. This wisdom is without flaw or divided purpose. It has no ulterior motives or is misleading. Our hearts have been purified by Christ and have become unstained by the world. This wisdom is peaceable. **It doesn't look to start fights, quarrels, or squabbles, but it is more than just an outward serenity. It is the content attitude that the Christian has because we share in God's content attitude toward the world. We can be peaceable because we have been made at peace with God through Christ. We can forgive because we have been forgiven.**

James continues. It is gentle. This wisdom is not insistent on rights, and is truly gentle toward inferiors or to those who have wronged us. The apostle says it is open to reason, it takes note the opinions of others. **James says it is full of mercy and good fruits.** This wisdom shares and expresses the mercy and love received in Jesus Christ to our dealings with others. He finishes by saying it is impartial and sincere.

James concludes by saying, **"And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Remember what peace is? It is a right relationship with God. It comes from Christ, the One Who came from above, the One Who is wisdom personified.**

He is the One Who lived a pure life in our place, and was peaceable and gentle to all.

He didn't and doesn't play favorites.

He is full of mercy and good fruits, and bestows and credits them on us through His death in our place.

He gives us His righteousness, and by His Spirit, produces good works in us.

The harvest is His and because of Him. We are the field the harvest is sown in.

Wisdom is certainly a gift from above, but that isn't the only thing that God gives. And what does God give?

**His gives us our bodies, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessary temporal and eternal blessings. He gives eyes to read His Word, ears to hear its wonderful proclamations of grace and peace, and mouths to receive under the bread and wine the body and blood of Jesus that forgives. Truly every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no change or variation. Wisdom is really just one of those things!**