

Sermon Notes

A TEST OF SAVING FAITH: IS YOUR LIFE GOVERNED BY HEAVENLY WISDOM?

James 3:17-18

Introduction

1. The origin of godly wisdom is “*from above*” (verse 17a).

2. Seven characteristics of godly wisdom (verse 17b).
 - a) The *condition* of our hearts: *Pure*.
 - “*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*” (1 John 3:3).
 - The word “*pure*” refers to that inner quality which keeps the Christian from the impurities of the flesh.
 - Before the Lord Jesus can indwell us as the Wisdom of God, He has to cleanse us from sin and take upon Himself the guilt of our sin. When that takes place, we are pure.
 - The cleansing process must be a continuous one. A Christian keeps clean by being wise and permitting the indwelling Christ continuously to engage in the cleansing process.

 - b) The *attitudes* of the heart in dealing with our fellow human beings:
 - i) *Peaceable*: not the outside joy or happiness of the world, but an inner spiritual tranquility and peace.
 - It is the peace that comes only as the result of the forgiveness of sin and the taking by Christ of our guilt of sin: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you*” (John 14:27).
 - Peace of heart is the natural outcome of purity of heart, of the indwelling of Christ in the heart, who is designated as the Prince of Peace.
 - Purity is first, says James, then true wisdom is peaceable: “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*” (Rom 12:18).
 - Seeking peace in relationship is not a minor theme in the Bible (1 Pet 3:1,2,11; Eph 4:3).

 - ii) *Gentle*: It is an active grace; the ability to apply the Golden Rule: to forgive when strict justice gives him the perfect right to condemn. Example: Mat 18:21-35.
 - Different from the “*meekness*” (verse 13): the submissive attitude of the heart toward God and, therefore, men. It is a passive grace.

 - iii) *Open to reason (willing to yield)*: The message of James is that we should listen, have our minds open to persuasion, and when we are persuaded, even the advice

comes from our subordinates or inferiors, obey and be good followers, since we cannot all be leaders in the very nature of things. This word can also mean “to believe, or trust in, to have confidence in.” So James is telling us that once we are persuaded of the trustworthiness of a leader, we ought to have confidence in him.

c) The *actions*.

i) *Full of mercy and good fruits.*

- Luke 6:36, “*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*”
- It means mercy for the man who is in trouble, even if the trouble is his own fault.
- It is full of mercy which issues in *good fruits*, that is, which issues in practical help.
- It also indicates the desirability and expectancy of the results (*good fruits*).
- There is no way for us to show mercy to everyone we meet. We should be selective and look at the possible results, effects, accomplishments (Mat 7:6), and that certainly what it means to have heavenly wisdom.
- However, we must show mercy to anyone who needs our mercy as far as we can.

ii) *Impartial* (different from *partiality* or *favouritism* in 2:1). The word here means “undivided,” in the sense of unwavering; it knows its own mind, chooses its course and abides by it. There are those who think that it is clever never to make one’s mind up about anything. They speak about having an open mind and about suspending judgment. But the Christian wisdom is based on the Christian certainties which come to us from God through Jesus Christ.

iii) *Sincere* or *without hypocrisy*.

- We should not try to be two different people, with an outward life maintained for appearance’ sake but an inward heart kept secret and very different.
- Being *impartial* demands a firm commitment of mind and heart, and so, being *sincere* demands an equally firm commitment to a matching life.

3. The end result of the godly wisdom (verse 18).

- By “*a harvest of righteousness*,” James is saying that righteousness is the seed that produces the harvest of good life (pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere).
- Righteousness is the character or quality of being right or just.
- Man’s righteousness is imputed through Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God.
- Righteousness is not merely “law-abiding” due to the fear of punishment.
- The main lesson: nothing good can ever grow in an atmosphere where men are at variance with one another. The fruit of righteousness is only sown by the peacemaker in atmosphere of peace (“*a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace*”).

Conclusion.

Heavenly wisdom is not just knowledge or just the right way to apply knowledge to govern country or human to human relationship or sometimes called, networking, to gain worldly success, status, riches or promotion, but it is a harmonious relationship with God and men.

1. *All* born again Christians are to possess heavenly wisdom as Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God*, dwells in our heart. They are the marks of saving faith.
2. All Christians are meant to manifest *all* the characteristics of heavenly wisdom.
3. The characteristics of heavenly wisdom are *not natural characters* of a person.

Finally, the Christian's supreme desire and persistent effort, according to the liveliness of his faith, is to extend God's kingdom that was inaugurated with the song of the angels, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*" From the seed of the "gospel of peace," sown "in peace," the "fruit of righteousness," that is the heavenly wisdom, will spring.