

## 03.13.11 / James 3:13-18

**Passage Insight**

There are two types of wisdom presented in this passage: worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom. Our actions display the source of our wisdom. Just like our words reveal the nature of our heart, as we saw in James 3:2-12, our actions and the manner in which we conduct ourselves reveal the source our wisdom and show us to be either grounded in the worship of self or in the worship of Christ.

As we examine worldly wisdom, James shows us that this wisdom is recognized by its fruit: bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. This fruit points clearly to a worship of self. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had the desire to become like God, and when they saw what they thought was an opportunity to do so, they took it. Why? Because they loved themselves. They worshiped themselves, and they sought more glory and worship for themselves when they tried to become like God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The worldly wisdom that Satan spoke to Adam and Eve just before they ate of this tree encouraged self-worship. Satan knew that they desired to be like God, and they were lured and enticed by this desire (James 1:14) when Satan told them that they would not die if they ate of the tree. In short, Satan spoke worldly wisdom to them. What's the outcome of such worldly wisdom? Today's passage (and the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis) shows us that it leads to "disorder and every vile practice", telling us that things are sent into chaos when our ultimate desire is to see ourselves glorified. This has serious implications for the body of Christ. James has already shown us in verses 9 and 10 from last week that there is dissention and division in the body due to hearts that are abundant with evil, and in today's passage he makes it clear that the worship of self, which leads to the fruit of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, leads to the same.

So what's the fix? As we've said, the cause of our obsession with worldly wisdom is ultimately self-worship, and when this worldly wisdom speaks into self-worship, the result is chaos. Self-worship and the resulting self-evangelizing in order to gain the worship of others is idolatry, because idolatry is what happens when we ascribe ultimate value to someone or something that is not truly of ultimate value. The only way to fix this is to instead recognize and rightly ascribe ultimate value to that which is truly and ultimately valuable, which leads us to worship that thing. The only one who is truly and ultimately valuable is God Himself. Jesus, who is God in human flesh, is the only one who perfectly worships the Father, and when He lives in us, He gives us the capacity to worship as well. When Jesus lives inside of us, we are quite literally inhabited and overrun with Godly wisdom, as Jesus is Godly Wisdom Himself. Let's take a look at what this looks like.

Just as we asked the question, "How do we recognize worldly wisdom?", we must also ask, "How do we recognize Godly wisdom?" Today's passage points out that such wisdom is recognized by its purity, its peacefulness, its gentleness, its reasonableness, its mercy, its good fruit, its impartiality in judgment, and its sincerity. This is quite the list. We must be careful not to attempt to live out these characteristics in our lives, as they are merely the result of God's wisdom, never the result of our attempts to make things happen. Ultimately, when we see such markers, we can know that God is at work, because these characteristics point directly to Jesus. While there are many examples throughout the Bible of how such characteristics point to Christ, a few are listed here:

Purity – Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Peaceable – John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Gentle and Impartial Judge – Isaiah 42:2-4

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not grow faint or be discouraged  
till he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his law.

Worldly wisdom has its end result "...disorder and every vile practice." The result of Godly wisdom is quite different. In verse 18, rather than division and chaos, we see a harvest of righteousness, or the fruit of righteousness. This righteousness can only come to us by the work of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Righteousness is the result of Christ, who IS Godly wisdom. This righteousness is marked by peacefulness, by order, and as we see in John 17:22-23, by the unification of the body of Christ.

So, to recap, we have examined briefly two types of wisdom: the earthly wisdom and Godly wisdom. We have asked the questions, "How is this wisdom recognized?", "What does this wisdom point to?", and "What is the end result of this wisdom?" The hope is that through this exercise we will see what our actions reveal about the wisdom of our own lives and how Jesus Christ is truly the wisdom of God.

### Application Questions / Prayer

#### Godly Wisdom

- 1) How have you seen Godly wisdom bear the fruits of peacefulness and righteousness?
- 2) What was the impact on those who came into contact with this fruit?

#### Worldly Wisdom

- 1) Where do you currently see "...disorder and every vile practice" in your life?
- 2) What specifically is worldly wisdom saying to you to encourage your desires?
- 3) This "wisdom" is a lie, and the only cure for a lie is the truth. Christ is the Godly truth that replaces this lie (John 14:6). What does repentance look like for you as you trust Godly wisdom rather than that of the world?
- 4) Who can help you with this?

#### Becoming Wise

- 1) As we've seen, Jesus is the Wisdom of God. Consider Luke 10:38-42. Where do you currently struggle with the idea of sitting at the feet of Jesus?
- 2) How has sitting at the feet of Jesus changed the outcome of your life?

#### Sources

- Prayer

- Thom Asta
- A Handbook on The Letter from James