

**"True Faith and Wisdom"**

**James 3:13-18**

**Part 2**

**Introduction:** Today we return to our study of the book of James and as we do we again come to the section where James is focused upon the subject of wisdom. Now the last time we were together we started into this section and we took a journey into the Old Testament to look at the subject of "wisdom".

Let me remind you that James was writing to Jewish believers and they would have known the Old Testament and the subject of "wisdom". They would have known what we looked at in the Old Testament which was "Godly wisdom is proof that a person is truly saved".

Let me refresh your mind about what we looked at in our last study. We looked at 2 points concerning wisdom:

1. The Value of Wisdom.
2. The Source of Wisdom.

It is the source of wisdom that I want to remind you about.

**Job 28:28**

<sup>28</sup> *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*

**Psalm 111:10**

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.*

The last time we were together I explained to you that "to fear the Lord" is to have a reverential trust and respect for God. It is really a reference to saving faith.

Here in Psalm 111 we can see that the BEGINNING of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. So when person comes to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour they are then given wisdom from God. Let me show you something else that Job recorded.

**Job 28:20-23**

<sup>20</sup> *Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?*

<sup>21</sup> Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

<sup>22</sup> Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

<sup>23</sup> God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

God is the Source of wisdom so apart from Him know one can know true wisdom. Therefore those who are saved will surely manifest the wisdom of God because the Spirit of God indwells each of us who are saved.

This is exactly what James knew also and so in the verses that are before us he presents his readers with another test of True Saving Faith and the test is wisdom.

### I. The Works of Wisdom

#### Notice James 3:13

This verse sets the stage for the verses that will follow in this section. James asks a question that I am sure many would raise their hand to.

James then answers his own question. He says the one who is wise will not need to say a word about his wisdom because the wisdom will manifest itself in 2 ways:

1. Through a good lifestyle.
2. Through a humble spirit.

The point which James is making here is that the person who possesses the wisdom of God will manifest that wisdom in a quiet humble lifestyle.

**The word "meekness" does not mean weakness but it refers to power under control.** In other words the person who is saved will have Godly wisdom and the Godly wisdom will cause the person to live a life of self control.

Now James is going to go on and he will describe 2 different kinds of wisdom.

### II. Worldly Wisdom

#### Notice James 3:14a

Here are the characteristics of worldly wisdom.

1. Bitter envying.

The word "bitter" means exactly what it says. The word "envying" is a very ugly word. To be jealous of someone is to desire something which they have. But to envy someone is to not just desire what they have but to also desire to see them lose what they have.

Let me show you what bitter envying would look like when it is carried out.

When Jesus was born there was a king by the name of Herod. He was a man who possessed worldly wisdom and he was full of "bitter envy".

### **Matthew 2:1-3**

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*

*<sup>2</sup> Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

*<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

Herod was jealous because there was someone who was born and that someone was referred to as a king. That was a threat to him. Instead of rejoicing in the birth of Jesus Christ he manifested "bitter envy".

### **Matthew 2:16**

*<sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

He was not only jealous of the title given to Jesus but Herod also desired to remove the title from him by having Jesus killed. That is bitter envy!

## **2. Strife**

The word "strife" here is a very interesting word. Here is the Blue Letter Bible definition:

*"a desire to put one's self forward".*

The word was often used of politics. It was used to describe a person who was seeking a political office by an unfair means.

Now let me pull this together in the context which James uses the word here. It refers to a person who is consumed with promoting self at any cost. So if we combine this with "bitter envy" then we can see that that person who has worldly wisdom is someone who is all consumed with self. They cannot rejoice with others who have been blessed in life but instead they are bitter and they always desire personal gain and will go to any length to promote themselves.

This person is only happy when they can put others down and when they experience personal gain. They have no contentment in life because more is never enough.

**Application:**

Let me just say that this is the opposite of what we see in the life of Jesus Christ. He placed His comforts and His praise aside in order to meet the needs of others. Let me show you what Paul said in Philippians.

**Philippians 2:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

<sup>4</sup> *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

<sup>5</sup> *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

<sup>7</sup> *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Listen to what this means:

*Jesus, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was*

*born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!*

All of this was for meeting the need of mankind. This is the wisdom that should be seen in our lives. If it is not then there is a problem.

### **Notice James 3:14b**

Here James tells his readers not to glory or DELIGHT in this, and they were not to lie against the Truth. What does this mean?

They PROFESSED to be saved and to have embraced the Gospel but to have "bitter evening and strife" was evidence that they were not saved.

Listen to the words of Matthew Henry on this thought:

*"Pretend what you will, and think yourselves ever so wise, yet you have abundance of reason to cease your glorying, if you run down love and peace, and give way to bitter envying and strife. Your zeal for truth, and your boasts of knowing more than others, if you employ these only to make others hateful, and to show your own spite and heart-burnings against them, are a shame to your profession of Christianity, and a downright contradiction to it. Lie not thus against the truth."*

Now I do need to say that even as believers we are not perfect and James knows this. There is not one person here who does not have the potential of falling into exactly what is described here. A carnal believer can look and sound just like an unsaved person.

But I believe that what James is saying is that this cannot be the PATTERN in our lives. Let me show you something which John wrote.

### **1 John 3:5-9**

<sup>5</sup> *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

<sup>6</sup> *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

<sup>7</sup> *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

<sup>8</sup> *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

<sup>9</sup> *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

John's message is not that we no longer sin but that the pattern of sin is broken when we get saved.

Now James will go on and he will show the source of this wisdom.

### **Notice James 3:15**

Here James uses 3 words to describe the source of this wisdom.

1. **Earthly** - This means it is all about things that are here in this world.
2. **Sensual** - This means it is of the flesh. In other words this wisdom lives to please personal selfish desires.
3. **Devilish** - This means it is "demon like". In other words it is characteristic of the demonic world.

Let me put these all together and help you to see something here that will bring this into focus.

The person who exercises this wisdom is focused upon the here and now. There is no focus upon eternity. It is all about what can be gained in this life. It is living for the desires of the flesh and indulging in the stuff and the entertainment of this world.

### **Conclusion:**

It reminds me of the people in Noah's day.

### **Matthew 24:37-39**

<sup>37</sup> *But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

<sup>38</sup> *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

<sup>39</sup> *And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man .*