James 3:13-18

Man’s Wisdom vs. God’s Wisdom

Good morning. Please open your Bibles to the New Testament Epistle of James. Today our scripture of focus will be chapter 3 verses 13-18. Let us begin today with a hypothetical question, if God were to offer you anything you wanted and there were no limits to the offer what would you ask for? I must admit there are times when I wanted to ask for a time machine so that I could visit different times in history just to experience them. Would anyone like to share what you would ask for? Today in our discussion we will be finishing chapter 3 of the epistle by looking at the subject of wisdom. The title of the message is “Man’s Wisdom vs. God’s Wisdom.” We will be looking specifically at what human wisdom looks like compared to Godly wisdom and what each will result in when they are followed to their logical conclusions.

**13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

13: The question that James is asking is verse 13 is who among his readers thinks they are wise. If someone were to ask us if we thought we were wise what would we say? This is asked because there are many people in the world today who think they are wise, but don’t show they are through their actions. The way that someone shows they are wise is through their good behavior. People that wish to be known as being wise think they have wisdom because they know a lot of things. Having knowledge of facts is a good thing, but wisdom is much more than recalling facts and information. In the Old Testament book of Wisdom (Proverbs) the teacher of wisdom teaches his son in chapter 3:13-17 what the value of wisdom is to those who seek it. **“Blessed is a person who finds wisdom, And one who obtains understanding. 14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver, And her produce better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels, And nothing you desire compares with her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. 17 Her ways are pleasant ways, And all her paths are peace.”** Looking carefully at the passage we see that wisdom is something that is given by God, not obtained by acquiring worldly knowledge. As we will discuss later there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. In addition to this, Solomon is teaching that the greatest treasure in all the earth is wisdom. Solomon was offered anything he wanted from God and if you remember the account in 1 Kings chapter 2 Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he could rule the people justly. Through this deed Solomon showed God that he valued wisdom over anything else.

14: Having jealousy and being selfish in your heart, yet thinking you are wise is an arrogant attitude and is not the truth. The idea here is that those who have ideas and have a notion as to what is wise, yet they do not ever act on those thoughts, then t a type of wisdom that is not useful. Verse 14 is showing us that someone who is seeking the false wisdom of man seeks to have this wisdom because they desire to obtain things for themselves such as wealth or power. Also, James says that man’s wisdom results in jealousy and causes people to become very jealous of each other because they all desire to use the wisdom they seek for their own selfish desires. As we will see, the wisdom of God seeks quite different things and will have much different results when it is obtained.

15: This arrogant attitude is not from God and those who have this are experiencing the mentality of those who have rebelled against God. This wisdom is of the natural depraved mind of man. Human wisdom, according to James, has three characteristics: firstly, this wisdom is earthly, second it is natural and thirdly it is demonic. Being earthly means that it is limited to what man can discover by himself. Natural wisdom means that the only kind of wisdom man can have without God is limited by the natural depraved mind he has been dealing with since the fall of man in the garden of Eden. There is only so much that wisdom can accomplish when it is based upon a depraved mind. Demonic wisdom is that which comes directly from Satan. What is determined in this world to be wise is that which is in total opposition to God. We are seeing the results of man’s wisdom causing so much suffering in the world today. Families have broken apart and society is struggling because man is rejecting the design of the family as ordained by God in His Word. James also makes the point that this type of thinking comes from Satan. Satan wants us to think that we are wise enough without God and that we can make it on our own. Satan asked Eve the question that has been causing people problems since the beginning of time. In Genesis 3 verse 1 the serpent asked Eve “**Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”** This question has been adapted to all areas of life where now we see things such as marriage, the life of children in the womb and sexuality all being challenged. We are hearing several teachers deny the Bible’s clear teaching on these subjects, which is the power of Satan trying to cause followers of Christ to doubt what is clearly taught in Scripture.

16: When human wisdom is embraced, and God’s wisdom is rejected James tells us in verse 16 that the result is chaos and evil. Looking around us today we are seeing the results of man’s wisdom being embraced. Even though there is so much suffering caused by our own doing, we will see that God’s Word promises us that restoration can take place if we place our trust in Him. Also, James will not begin to show us what happens when man places His trust and seeks His wisdom.

17: God’s wisdom is different than that of the world. God’s wisdom has the following characteristics according to James: first, it is pure. Purity is rare and means that God’s wisdom is without any kind of depravity. Purity also means to be clean and without defects. Secondly, God’s wisdom is peace-loving. It also results in establishing what is best for all people because when God’s ways are used to settle conflicts it will result in peace. Thirdly, the wisdom from God is gentle. Rather than being pushy and demanding to always be right, God’s wisdom is shown in His people through their gentleness towards others. The next characteristic is reasonable. Have you ever had an interaction with someone who was so stuck in their ways that they were being unreasonable? When someone is focused on their own wisdom, they can become unreasonable which means they will refuse to have any discussion on their opinion. God’s wisdom is reasonable because when someone follows God’s wisdom they seek after what is best for others, not just solely focused on their own desires. Next, God’s wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits. When someone has embraced God’s wisdom, they are more likely to forgive when they have been wronged and they are looking for ways to show God’s love to others through their deeds, which James refers to as fruits. Being willing to forgive numerous times is a sign of embracing God’s wisdom rather than the wisdom of man. Being impartial means that someone who accepts God’s wisdom does not take sides when being asked to settle disputes between others. Rather than taking sides, being impartial means listening to both sides equally with patience and helping your friends to resolve their dispute peacefully. Finally, God’s wisdom is free from hypocrisy. When someone relies on God’s wisdom to guide them, they will not act in ways that go against what they say they believe. James wants his readers to remember that what a believer in Christ does is just as important as what they say. God’s people are called to act and speak in ways that are consistent with their profession of faith. All these descriptors of God’s wisdom clearly show us that those who accept His wisdom will have a life that is different than the rest of society and that life results in being at peace with God.

18: As we conclude the passage James reminds us that the fruit of righteousness results in peace and trusting in God’s wisdom will bring us the life we were intended to live through Him. If we commit ourselves to obtaining the wisdom of God and humble ourselves to following His teachings found in Scripture, then the result will be peace. Those who follow the wisdom of God will bear fruit that will be spread to others who will then bear fruit themselves and the cycle will continue. Just like an apple can fall from a tree and then the seed from that apple can result in another apple tree root, the wisdom of God when it is shared can result in that wisdom growing and taking root in others. The prophet Isaiah echoes these words in Isaiah 32:7 **“And the work of righteousness will be peace,** **And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.”** Also, the Apostle Paul prayed that the church in Ephesus would seek God’s wisdom to guide them. **“.. that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17).**

As we conclude our study of James chapter 3 today with our discussion regarding humanly versus Godly wisdom let us take a moment to review the chart provided for us on the screen. As you can see there are many differences between human and Godly wisdom. Knowledge is having an awareness of the world around us and knowing information that is helpful to our lives. However, wisdom is given by God through His word and takes the basic knowledge man can obtain on his own and elevates it to a knowledge that far exceeds what man can do with his own depraved mind. Just as God spoke to the prophet Isaiah **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).** As we move forward in our study of the epistle, we will continue to discover that living out our faith in Christ is something that we are called to do both mentally as well as physically. May we be known as people who seek after God’s wisdom and those who use that wisdom to guide our lives. Relying on our own understanding will not bring us the peace of God, but we are promised by God that if we seek Him with our whole heart, He will guide us in living in a way that will bring peace not only to our own lives, but also to those who live with us.

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| Man’s Wisdom | God’s Wisdom |
| Defiled by Sin  Always wants to be in the right!  Aggressive  Unreasonable  Full of anger and self-seeking  Shows partiality  Hypocritical | Pure  Peace-Loving  Gentle  Reasonable  Full of Mercy and Good Fruits  Impartial  Free of Hypocrisy |