

## **“Two Different Wisdoms”**

James 3:13-18, July 25, 2010

### **A. Godly Wisdom Comes from a Humble Heart**

- Do you pray to be wise and understanding (ex. of SGH)? Wisdom is the ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight, common sense, good judgment. **Proverbs 1:7** says *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”* Godly wisdom is not based on a superior intellect which may be prideful, but on humbleness before God and recognition of our own inability to be Biblically-wise. According to James, wisdom is not just an intellectual activity, but a way of life (see the second half of v 1). Those who are wise will be gentle, humble and exemplary in their conduct.
- Is your life characterized by humbleness before God and a willingness to pursue wisdom as described in James 3 rather than wisdom as we define it? Meekness and humility were considered weak traits in the world of the first century and in many ways still are (ex. of working in bank). Jesus pointed to the blessing of meekness in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). Are our “deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom,” i.e., the way we live our lives, indicative of a Biblical understanding of the relationship between humility and wisdom? Is our outward conduct a demonstration of an inward understanding that Godly wisdom comes from a submissive heart?

## **B. Worldly Wisdom Comes from a Self-Centered Heart**

- James contrasts Godly wisdom with earthly or worldly wisdom (vs. 14-15).

The second half of **Proverbs 1:7** says: "...fools despise wisdom and discipline." A "fool" in the OT is someone who is morally deficient, who resists knowledge and correction of any type, who follows the wisdom of the world. James says that envy and selfish ambition are connected to earthly wisdom (v. 14). Those who are motivated by a self-centered heart are unable to exercise true wisdom because their motives are not pure.

- Notice how James describes this false wisdom in verse 15. It is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. This type of self-produced wisdom and genuine wisdom which comes from meekness of spirit are polar opposites. Only the Spirit of God can provide true wisdom. The Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 1:20, 25** puts it this way, "*Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*"
- What do selfish ambition and envy produce? Disorder and every evil practice (v. 16). James' call is to search our hearts for areas of envy and selfish ambition in order to ask the Holy Spirit to bring repentance. How many churches in our day have come apart because of the selfish ambitions of pastors and/or leaders? How many folks have left churches over issues that quite possibly were rooted in selfishness (ex. of critiquing other worship

services)? In our world of instantaneous texting and emailing, how many thoughtless responses have we sent without consulting God for wisdom (ex. of Brittany Yeager and the Crossroads member I emailed)?

- Earthly wisdom is rooted in the ways of the world, where it causes the spread of disorder and evil practice because of its ungodly nature.

### **C. Which Kind of Wisdom Do You Choose?**

- What kind of wisdom do you choose? The wisdom that comes from heaven: pure, peace-loving, considerate of others, submissive, full of mercy, impartial and sincere? Or the peace of the world: earthly, unspiritual, of the Devil?
- Godly wisdom is directly connected to and imitative of the character of God. And it produces peace. Look at verse 18: "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." James says that pursuing wisdom results in peace and righteousness.
- There are 93 times when the word "peace" is used in the NT. Here are three quotes:
  - **Matthew 5:9**, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*"
  - **Titus 3:1-2**: "*Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility to all men.*"
  - **Hebrews 12:14**: "*Make every effort to live in peace with all men...*"

- Godly wisdom and the peace it produces find their source in the character of Christ, in his selfless, submissive act of coming out of glory to walk among us, to die for us in order that we may "have peace with God" (Romans 5:1), the most fundamental peace. James says that those who promote peace raise a harvest of righteousness. Are you a peacemaker (ex. of Van Horn and Eberhart @ CFB in Vienna or Hispanic ministry & attys, social workers, etc)?
- There are two very different wisdoms presented in James 3. Our wisdom must be rooted in a genuine humility before God, a daily realization of our unworthiness and our dependence on the saving work of Christ, and a rigorous examination of ourselves in the light of the Scriptures to see what elements of worldly wisdom remain in us. Our lives must be characterized by purity, love for peace, considerateness, submission, mercy, impartiality and sincerity, producing good fruit in keeping with repentance. There is no other way to acquire true wisdom outside of the knowledge of God, a trust in Him through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us. James teaches us that our choice of wisdom will have a bearing on our daily conduct and our interactions with those around us. May God grant us grace to humble ourselves before the Savior, thank him for his great mercy, and ask him through his Spirit to give us true, Godly wisdom.