

Wisdom For Fools

James 3:13-18

	Heavenly Wisdom	Earthly Wisdom (Foolishness)
Display	Meek, Pure, Peaceful, Gentle, Reasonable, Merciful, Fruitful, Impartial, Sincere	Bitter Jealousy, Selfish Ambition, Arrogant Boasting, Deceitful Lies
Source	From Above	The World System, The Anti-God Mentality, Demonic Opposition
Result	Righteous results, peaceful atmosphere	Chaotic Disorder, Sinful Conduct

I. The Heavenly Wise Demonstrates Power Under God's Control (13, 17-18)

A. The Display Of Godly Wisdom (13,17)

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom... ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

B. The Source Of Godly Wisdom (17a)

But the wisdom from above

C. The Result Of Godly Wisdom (18)

¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

II. The Worldly Wise Demonstrates Pride Out Of Control (14-16)

A. The Display Of Worldly Wisdom (14)

¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

B. The Source Of Worldly Wisdom (15)

¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

C. The Result Of Worldly Wisdom

¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Conclusion:

- The root of our evil world is sin.
- Earthly wisdom without God abounds without lasting hope or results.
- The Wisdom of God advocates truth, peace, justice and mercy when it aligns to God Himself.
- The hope to overcome evil full justice, full payment and full forgiveness which is offered through the death and resurrection of Christ who justly bore our sin.
- Divine Wisdom: If you want to change the world, change one heart at a time with the Gospel of Christ.

Discussion:

- What is the main source you rely on for Wisdom? What are the limits of our best politicians, educators, philosophers and activists in comparison to God?
- What wisdom does God impart towards our world's greatest problems? Civil rights? Pandemic? Slavery? Political turmoil?
- Is the Gospel of Christ the wisest solution for our sin sick world today? Why or why not? If it is, why is it so resisted? If it is, how can we employ the Gospel to bring societal change?

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Introduction:

1. The reaction to the brutal killing of George Floyd through the alleged criminal act of a police officer has elicited great emotion. The officer's knee was on Foster's neck for "8 minutes, 46 seconds in total, and 2 minutes, 53 seconds after Floyd was unresponsive."
https://apple.news/A_sFxtrv-R5aQnN-Gu6cAiw

As of this recording, there have been multiple days of demonstrations in several cities. Some of these demonstrations have led to riots.

What's the difference between the Demonstrators and the Rioters?

- It is a right to demonstrate in this country
 - It is not a right to break the law by rioting
 - Justice is not accomplished through injustice
 - Looting a Target store or burning down a police station doesn't advance the cause to weed out injustice or prejudice
 - That's an act of terrorism
 - The criminal behavior has dishonored the cause of George Floyd
 - Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.: "The limitation of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility."
 - During this critical time in our country, we will observe people who act like fools and others who act wisely.
 - We must also make a choice – we can respond with wisdom or respond with foolishness.
2. Control tongue, control action
 - Facemask filter for mouth: quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to wrath
 - Wise person – evaluates issues, predicaments and trials from God's perspective
 - Fools – speak the first thing on their mind without thinking about anyone else's perspective other than their own
 3. **Sophomores** – wise fool
 - *Sophos* = wise
 - *Moros* = fool

- James is contrasting wisdom and foolishness from the diverse sources and opposite impact.

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I. The Heavenly Wise Demonstrates Power Under God's Control (13, 17-18)

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- **Who is wise and understanding?**

- One who is wise has a divine perspective vs. a fool which only has self-perspective

Proverbs 1:7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Psalms 14:1 "A fool says in his heart that there is no God"

1. Meek: Power Under Control (13)

- "meek" = *prauteti*

- **Meekness Is Power Under Control**

- the Greek word does not mean weak or mild
- IE/ A young soldier in the Peloponnesian Wars wrote to his fiancée about a gift he had for her. It was a white stallion. He described it as "the most magnificent animal I have ever seen. He responds obediently to the slightest command. He allows his master to direct him to his full potential." And then he wrote, "He is a meek horse."
 - The soldier was not saying that the horse was shy nor was it like an old plow horse that allowed people to beat on it
 - The horse had great spirit - a spirit submissive to the writer

Numbers 12:3 "Now the man **Moses** was very **meek**, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." (KJV)

- This is a strange description for a man who led a revolution against the Egyptians, faced Pharaoh and demanded him to "Let my people go", lead 2.5

million people through the wilderness and got angry at his people for forsaking God

- Meek Moses was no shy guy, no blush mush, no sissy, no tip-toe through the tulips guy
- In fact, he could not enter the Promise land because of his temper (striking a rock rather than touching it for water)

- We need a Meek Moses to lead an effective revolution against the oppressive Egypt today! (whatever our Egypt might be)

- **Jesus**
 - calls Himself "**Meek** and Lowly" (Mt 11:29)
 - Paul pleads in 2 Cor 10:1 by the meekness and gentleness of Christ
 - Matthew 21:5 "Behold your **King** comes to you, meek, and sitting upon a donkey."

- The world views the strong man like the super heroes with muscles and an independent spirit
- But meekness is being strong and having it under control

- the Greek word does not mean weak or mild
- IE/ Aristotle used this word for the "Golden Mean"
- the point between extreme anger and extreme angerlessness

- **Haddon Robinson** writes that "**A meek person in the Greek sense of the term was controlled and balanced, getting angry at the right things at the right time. Injustice in the world, not personal insults, mattered to this person.**"

- Too many people respond out of control
 - Quick-tempered response to a comment
 - Revenge towards a hurt
 - Shoot first, apologize later

- Meekness according to James is: Being "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger"

Proverbs 16:32 "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city.."

- IE/ The Greeks described some winds as meek in contrast to hurricanes, or winds out of control.

2. **Pure**

- Pure = *hagne* – separate from sin

3. **Peaceful**

- *Erinike* – brings peace, blesses an enemy

4. Gentle

- "Gentle" = *epiekes* – compassionate, sensitive of others
- Gentleness realizes one's strength but brings in under control.
 - ie/ handling an egg - know you can crush it, yet gentle
 - ie/ carrying a baby - too rough can hurt it, must be gentle

5. Reasonable

- "reasonable" = *eupeithes* – obedient, compliant, not a trouble maker

6. Merciful

- Missionary Barry Smith (Hamilton, NZ): In light of the George Floyd's death, I am reminded of the time when I was a training officer for new officers coming to work in the Hamilton County Jail. The first night they worked with me, I would always take them over to the guard shack window which looked into the overflow room which had 30 bunks (but it was almost always over crowded with men sleeping on the floor) and I would ask them one critical and telling question: "When you look in there what do you see?" Unfortunately, many of them (both white and black officers) would reply with something like: "I see the scum of the earth," or "the dregs of society." I would then tell them: "Then that is how you will end up treating them. That is going to make your job very hard and put my life and job at risk, because you will end up having to justify your abuse of power at some stage in your career as a peace officer." (Facebook post)

7. Fruitful

- Good works result from heavenly wisdom
- Works that demonstrate our faith

8. Impartial

- "impartial" = *adiakritos* – one who doesn't discriminate
- James already talked about not discriminating against the poor person

9. Sincere

- "sincere" = *anupokritos* – not hypocritical
- The aim of James telling Christians to walk the talk, not just talk the talk

B. The Source Of Godly Wisdom (17a)

But the wisdom from above

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¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

1. Righteous Results

- Who can help us solve this injustice – the President? Congress? Governors? Police? Activists? Religion?
- Unless it comes from God, it will be ineffective and insufficient to solve the deep seeded problem of humanity
- In order to achieve righteousness, we can not earn it. We must have it given to us.
- Christ saves us to give us the ability to do right.

- Right is what is described in His Word.
- We can not harvest righteousness unless we apply God's wisdom!

2. Peaceful Atmosphere

- We've all been in tense fights – siblings, spouses, co-workers, politics, race
- But our goal is not about "Who's Right" but "What's Right"
- How can whites, blacks achieve peace – not focusing on who is right (that's ego driven), but what's right before God
- We're all created in the image of God
- We are all one Body in Christ

II. The Worldly Wise Demonstrates Pride Out Of Control (14-16)

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Romans 1:22 ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools,

- fools = moros (moron)
 - this word is not used of a person of low intelligence, but is contrasted with being wise
 - wisdom is based in the fear of the Lord (Prov), foolishness turns from God
 - a fool is one who is spiritually dull to spiritual things

Psalm 14:1 "A fool says in his heart that there is no God"

A. The Display Of Worldly Wisdom (14)

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1. Bitter Jealousy

- *zelon pikron* – harsh, acidic jealousy
- Watching politicians fight, news stations posture and public rant – there is an acidic jealousy

- We become bitter because of we don't have – freedoms, rights, possessions, attention
- Siblings can be bitterly jealous over attention
- Friends at school can become bitterly jealous
- We are all created equal before God and in the image of God, but the fight for equal rights can become bitter jealousy
- Civil rights is a good fight. Anger is a good emotion. But bitter jealousy is self-destructive.

2. **Selfish Ambition**

- *eritheian* – used of rivalry on who the most popular teacher is or financial opportunists who will step on others to get ahead
- The riots and looting were about selfish ambition
- Those bashing in car, stores (many of them black owned) and terrorizing innocent people want to stick it to any authority – sadly the message of George Floyd and justice for him has been clouded by the selfish ambition of those committing injustice
- The battle is spiritual – not flesh and blood.
- The problem is sin.
- White supremacy is a problem of selfish ambition.
- Communist oppression in China is a problem of selfish ambition.
- Riots and looting are about selfish ambition.
- **So what's the solution? The Gospel of Christ.**
- The forgiveness of sin is what is needed
- There are some who think a seat at the table is the answer. If everyone

3. **Arrogant Boasting**

- boastful claims
- Are you sick of boastful and demeaning Tweets?
- Are you finding relief from those that steal your credit at work by not having to be in the office with those people while you're sheltered in place?

4. **Deceitful Lies**

- Party politics on both sides of the aisle lie for selfish ambition
- The fact that facing Covid 19 has become a partisan battle instead of uniting together to fight a medical crisis is proof of deceitful lies

B. **The Source Of Worldly Wisdom (15)**

¹⁵ *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.*

1. The World System

- “earthly” = *epigeios*
- Not necessarily an evil source, but mundane
- It only rises to the level of issues on earth, but has no concern for heaven
- This
- **Secularism** – There is no reality outside of what exists in this world. Secularists will oppose God, prayer and faith in an effort to maintain a focus on worldly things. Secularists may not necessarily be atheists but will agree that God has no place in public life.
 - *Saeculum* = Latin for world
 - “Secularism asserts that public life is to be conducted without reference to religion or to any notion of transcendence.” (Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil*, p. 23)
 - **Government** that fails to apply wisdom from above is secular
 - **Education** that abandons the principles of God is secular
 - **Work** just to get ahead individually abandons God’s glory and becomes merely secular

Slide Summary

Philippians 3:18-20 For many, of whom ... walk as enemies of the cross of Christ ... with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Full Verses

Philippians 3:18-20 ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

2. The Anti-God Mentality

- “unspiritual” – *psuchiki*
- Uncapable of grasping spiritual things
- Paul used this term in 1 Cor 2:14 of those who couldn’t comprehend spiritual things
- **Jude 19** It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit (*psuchiki*).

3. Demonic Opposition

- “demonic” = *daimoniodes* – the source is an evil spirit, not the Holy Spirit

C. The Result Of Worldly Wisdom

¹⁶ *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

1. Chaotic Disorder

- *Akastasia* = political disorder, revolution
- It's the rioting in the streets

2. Sinful Conduct

- Not all cops are bad cops, but some are.
- Not all protestors are rioters, but some are.
- Not all people in a racial group fit a stereotype, yet some do.
- The point is – evil exists everywhere. Sin exists everywhere. Among politicians, among cops, among Republicans and Democrats, among every one of us.
- Bad cops need to stop sinning like I need to stop sinning.
- Until we drink and apply God's wisdom, sinful conduct will continue – in Minneapolis and at Fellowship Bible Church.
- **May the wisdom of God applying the Gospel of Christ be our salvation and hope!**

Conclusion:

Congratulations to our College, High School, Middle School and Elementary School graduates. You've been provided a great source of knowledge. But today, I ask, where will your source of wisdom be?

Without God, our education is merely secular.

I admire our young people today. They really want to make a difference. But do you want to make a temporary difference or an eternal difference?

Do you want to put a band aid on a societal issue until the world is judged in hell. Or do you want to advocate Christ's Kingdom of righteousness, love and sacrifice.

Conclusion:

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