

Confronting the Enemies of Unity in Our Attitudes – Part 2
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James 3:13-18
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I've asked you to turn with me in your Bibles to James 3. We're going to continue that message that we began last week. We've been in this section of James for a number of weeks, taking a break from our exposition of John to work on the subject of unity, and God's desire that His Body, His people, reflect the glory of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three distinct Persons, yet one substance, one essence. Three-in-one. We are to manifest a kind of unity as distinct persons, to have a oneness that mirrors the Trinity. That's what we saw when we looked at John 17. We had a number of messages from that chapter. We see that unity is God's design. The paradigm is the Trinity. God has given us everything necessary for this, but we have to guard it. We also looked at Ephesians 4 way back. It says:

Ephesians 4:3 ~ Make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

The word 'preserve' means 'guard, stand watch over'. You have to watch over this unity. God has put it in us. If you're a Christian, have truly repented of your sins, and believed in Christ, then there is a natural unity that you feel toward every other person who loves Jesus in truth. But, we have enemies that work against that unity, and which require diligence, effort, vigilance, to guard that unity. So we've been looking at James because James gives us some very practical help on how to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

James 3:1-4:12, we've titled the series that we're working through in that passage, 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity'. That's the title of our message today, 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity'. That's the series message, and then we've seen that there are three basic subtitles. James 3:1-2, in our words. We looked at that over two Sundays. Then last time, two weeks ago, we began to look at in our attitudes. 'Confronting the Enemies in Our Attitudes – Part 2'. That is today's title. So the first half of this message was preached two Sundays ago.

Now, what we see in James 3:13-18 is that James is challenging us to fight against the enemies of unity on the battlefield of our attitudes. Particularly our attitude toward wisdom, which is the key word in this passage. There are several key

words, but it's *the* key word, the wisdom. Because James is contrasting two types of wisdom: A wisdom from above and a wisdom that is earthly. So a heavenly wisdom versus an earthly wisdom. He's contrasting it because he wants the people he's writing to, to be able to discern what kind of wisdom they have in their own lives, and what kind of wisdom particularly as it relates to leaders.

As we said last time when we talked about this passage, the first question he leads with is: "Who is wise in understanding among you? Let him show it in his life." Well, in "Who is wise in understanding," the word 'understanding' is a unique word which means 'expert, expertise'. The question is: "Who are those who are regarded as experts in the things of God? Who are those who are regarded as those who are leaders in the Kingdom of God among the people? Who are they? If you are one, let this be your life. Show that you have the wisdom from above." The idea is that it's not easy to tell the difference between the wisdom from above and the wisdom from below. They can sound the same. You can have theological accuracy but not have true heavenly wisdom. You can be orthodox in your doctrine, but not possess true heavenly wisdom.

Now this is a progress and every Christian who's been born again is still dealing with the battles that these passages talk about. What he's talking about is: what is the basic tenor of someone's life? The application is, as I said earlier, formal leadership in the church ought to exhibit, elders and deacons, ought to exhibit this kind of character. Informal leaders, those that we look to, to be our mentors, or those who we look to for counsel, ought to exhibit heavenly wisdom. We need to be instructed in our ability to differentiate and distinguish between heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom. So he says there are very definite ways that you can see that. Look with me at James 3:13-18.

James 3:13-18 ~ 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 peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Let's pray together:

Father, as we bow our hearts before You right now, we again ask that You might supply us with grace. That the Spirit that inspired these words might illuminate them in our minds and hearts, make them alive in our souls. That we might be conformed to Your will. That we might see the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name, Amen.

About a year ago, one of our families moved away to Boston. Larry and Mary Harrison were a dear part of this church. They visited back at Easter time when they were in town. Actually, Larry was able to come. Mary wasn't because one of the boys was sick. But they were a wonderful part of the church, and what Larry did was he became a member of the, I want to say Special Forces. That's not it. He became a member of the Secret Service. The Secret Service protects the president, protects dignitaries, officials, but it also does something else—it protects the currency of the United States of America. One of the things that he had to do as a part of his job was learn a lot about currency and counterfeiting. Counterfeiting is something that people take to a great art, and so it requires a lot of diligence that it be guarded over. Our currency has to be protected. Counterfeiters don't pass out Monopoly money. It's easy to recognize Monopoly money from real money. No they work greatly. Sometimes at the grocery store, if you use a \$50 or a \$100, you might see the cashier hold the dollar up to the light because they've learned that there's a watermark that you can see in the true bills if you look at it carefully. It's always a little disconcerting when they do that to you, and it's like, "I hope I don't have a counterfeit bill right there." I certainly didn't know if I did, but anyway, you have to use discernment, and the idea here that James is saying is there is a counterfeit wisdom that's not easily distinguished from true wisdom. Really, this true wisdom versus false wisdom isn't seen in the outward, surface things, or the obvious things. It's seen in things that are obvious, but not which we look for first. Too often we look for the words and the verbal stuff. James says, "No, if you want to discern true wisdom, you have to know where to look." We started with four questions last week that help you to discern between true wisdom and false wisdom. The four questions were:

1. Where do you look?
2. What are you looking for?
3. How do you recognize it?

4. What difference does it make?

We looked at the first two, two weeks ago. Where do you look? And what are you looking for? Where do you look? James says, “You look in the person’s life. Not their words, but the way they live.” I mean their words are important, you are supposed to always test the words, but he’s saying if you’re going to discern between false wisdom and true wisdom, you need to look at their life. Just like Jesus said, “You know them by their fruits.” Verse 13, **...Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.** Let him show by his good behavior. Let him put on display that his good behavior is his good life, his manner of living. That’s where you look. You look in the life. What are you looking for? You’re looking for meekness. The word translated ‘gentleness’ we saw would be better as ‘meekness’. Meekness is an inward grace that manifests itself in outward gentleness. When we try to translate this word, it’s hard to translate because meekness isn’t used that much. People tend to use gentleness, but I think meekness is worth recovering because meekness is an inward attitude that then expresses itself in gentleness. The inward attitude is this, this is the essence of meekness that I regard all that God is doing in my life as good and right. That no matter how much I don’t like initially what He does, I regard it as right, and good, and best. The essence of meekness starts there in which we surrender to the will of God gladly. The Lord has done it and it is marvelous in our eyes, the Psalmist says. Things that happen, David said, “It was good for me that I was afflicted.” So meekness starts with that, and if you don’t have that, you don’t have meekness. Now if you have that attitude, it’s going to make you gentle, because when someone tramples on you, you’re learning to think this: The flesh wants to react. Wait a minute, the Lord is at work in this situation. There’s a Godward focus that meekness brings that then restrains us from attacking because we’re submitted to the Lord. “Lord, what are You doing in the situation? Why is this person responding like this, or treating me this way? What are You doing in this?” That’s meekness.

So where do you look? You look in the life. What are you looking for? You’re looking for meekness. How do you recognize it? You’re really looking for meekness and heavenly wisdom. Like heavenly wisdom is always seen by meekness. That’s the main point in this passage. Look at meekness, the gentleness of wisdom. What he does then is he says, “Okay, now this heavenly wisdom, this gentleness that comes from wisdom, what does it look like?” False wisdom versus true wisdom. How do you recognize heavenly wisdom? How do you recognize meekness and heavenly wisdom? How do you recognize false wisdom? What he does is he contrasts true wisdom and false wisdom. He sets them side by side and

says, “Look, this is true wisdom and this is false wisdom.” He says, “Look at false wisdom first,” and he tells us five characteristics of false wisdom. Then he tells us, “Now, look at true wisdom.” There are seven characteristics of true wisdom. So it’s seen in its character. If you want to be able to distinguish the counterfeit wisdom from true wisdom, you have to know the characteristics.

A treasury agent, a Secret Service agent, has to study the characteristics of true currency and then look for the false characteristics as well. So God says through James, “These are the characteristics you are to look for.” True wisdom is known by its character. Secondly, it’s known by its effects. There are two major points that are comparing and contrasting at both points. So I want you to see, we’re going to look at two points: The character of true wisdom versus false wisdom, that’s the first point, with 12 sub-points. Right? Because you’ve got seven characteristics of true wisdom and five characteristics of false wisdom. So we’re going to be there for a while to contrast the character of true wisdom versus false wisdom. Secondly, if you want to know the difference between true wisdom and false wisdom, look at the effects or the results. You’ll see the difference between true wisdom and false wisdom, not just in the character, but in the results, or the effects that it has. We’re going to see that there are two effects of true wisdom James says, and there are two affects of false wisdom that you can see. If we learn to look at these things in our own lives, we can see how we’re doing. Are we becoming the kind of person that someone should want to follow? All of us ought to aspire to that. We all ought to have as a heartbeat desire that we could say to someone else who is newer in the faith than we, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

1) How Do You Recognize True Wisdom?

So let’s begin to look at this. The first point which is actually the third question, putting it in the whole context to remember: How do you recognize true wisdom? Well, it’s seen in its character contrasted with false wisdom. What he does in Verse 14 is he starts to unpack five characteristics of false wisdom. There are five characteristics that James gives us in Verses 14 and 15 that are true of false wisdom. Remember, the person might be saying the right things, but if these things are in their heart, that means they’re not walking in true wisdom. The five characteristics:

1. Jealousy
2. Selfish Ambition

It's important to notice that those two characteristics are repeated twice. It's kind of a couplet that really powerfully encapsulates the essence of false wisdom. It's jealousy and selfish ambition. Do you see it in Verse 14? ***But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition...*** Look at Verse 16: ***For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist...*** So he repeats it. It's always important to note that that's emphatic. False wisdom is seen in the attributes of jealousy and selfish ambition. Those are the first two of the five characteristics. Now the word jealousy translates to a word that can sometimes mean 'zeal'. It means 'excitement of mind, fervency of spirit'. At its essence this word means that. In fact, it comes from a verb which means 'to boil'. So the idea is an excited state of mind, an excited mental state expressed in an eager desire. The idea is a consuming and controlling interest that is in someone's life. That fervent and consuming desire, jealousy, is the idea of protecting what one has, or getting what someone else has. That's jealousy. To protect what someone has or to get what someone else has. "If I don't have it, I want it, and I'm thinking about it all the time. If I have it, I'm worried you're going to take it from me, and I'm thinking about that all the time." That's jealousy.

Now with selfish ambition, he puts these together kind of as a couplet because they go hand in hand. Selfish ambition, this word comes from a verb which means 'to work for hire', 'connotes a mercenary spirit'. It was used in classical Greek of electioneering, or intrigue, or dishonesty in gaining political office. So the idea of campaigning, kind of a selfish desire to put oneself forward. So you see, jealousy and selfish ambition, this person who is jealous and selfishly ambitious is one who wants to be in the first place, like Diotrefes in 3 John. They want to be preeminent. It's the desire to once they have a position to hold on to it, not to allow other people to come in to their turf, or to want turf that someone else has that they haven't yet reached to. So the jealous and the selfishly ambitious, he says, Verse 14, ***...if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart...*** the verb 'you have' is a present tense Greek verb. The present tense verb in Greek is different than present tense verb in English. It's not talking about time. Tense in English is about time—past, present, future. Right? In Greek, tense is not so much about time as it is about kind of action. Not the time of the action, but the kind of action. The Greek present tense connotes continuous, ongoing action, and the Greek present tense is throughout this passage. Almost every verb in the passage is Greek present. This one means if your pattern of life is to be always thinking about your place, always thinking about how people are responding to you, "Are they infringing on my turf. I want this. I want this. I want this." If that's the mental state, always thinking like that, that is false wisdom. That's not true wisdom. Jealous, selfish ambition.

3. Arrogant

The third character quality of false wisdom is to be arrogant. He says in Verse 14, *...if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.* Do not be arrogant. Stop being arrogant. He's saying, "You're already being arrogant. You're selfishly ambitious, you're jealous, you're puffed up." The verb translated here as 'do not be arrogant' is a word which means 'to boast down'. It looks down on others. It delights in being above others, and James says, "Stop being arrogant. If you have jealousy and selfish ambition, you have no reason to be arrogant." Isn't it amazing how the nature of sin in us is that when we have the least reason to be arrogant, we can be the most arrogant?

You see that in a child. A two-year-old thinks he knows what he should do when you tell him, "No." Incredible arrogance. "Don't stick your finger in the light socket, Johnny." Hopefully Johnny doesn't, but he starts to move toward it, doesn't he? Why? Because he's arrogant. "Do you not realize that you're two years old? You know nothing about electricity. You know nothing about light sockets. You know nothing!" Johnny thinks he knows everything. "You don't know anything, Dad." How stupid. It's part of the essence of sin. Eve was tempted to think that she could know better than God. God said, "Don't eat the fruit," yet she chose to eat the fruit. Adam chose to eat the fruit. They sinned. Appalling arrogance and this idea of arrogance comes along with this wisdom that is of the world. It's what we were born and raised in, and if someone is not growing out of that, if there's still arrogance in their heart, then they are not manifesting the wisdom from above, the wisdom from God.

An arrogant person is unteachable. "I already know that. I don't need that. I've heard this before. I don't need that." When you have that attitude, that's something to watch out for. That's like the warning light going off. There's a problem. Let me tell you something, I believe the more that we grow in grace, when we're really growing before the Lord, the more humble we become. I was sharing with my kids this week, we were talking about Dr. Mack. I was sharing something about this idea that the more we grow in the Lord, the more dependent we become. The more godly we become, the stronger we become, but in reality this paradox happens. We become stronger, we're growing in the Lord, we're growing in grace, we're putting off sin, we're putting on righteousness. It's still a process, it's still a fight every day of your life, and the fight becomes more intense, not less intense. The reality is we become more dependent. I believe the godly man at 80 is more dependent than he was at 20. He's so much farther along in grace, but he knows because he's

farther along in grace, he sees how empty we are apart from Christ. This means that the 80-year-old, godly man can sit and listen to someone teach, even if he's heard it before, and he can learn. He doesn't immediately dismiss it, "Oh, I know all this."

I mean, Dr. Mack is going to preach again on July 29th, and then August 5th he's going to be here and I'm going to preach that day. I don't think he comes in thinking, "Well, Ty's only 48, I'm 77. What's he got to teach me?" No, he's a man of God, how we should all be. If it's a brand new believer who is talking to us, and sharing their experience, and telling us something that they learned from the Word, we ought to be wanting to feed on that truth with them because we all know we are so dependent. We can rejoice that God is teaching us through one another, and the Lord has made us to need one another. None of us are independent. This is why we're supposed to remind one another continually of the truth. Isn't it amazing how much we need to be reminded? I mean have you had this experience a number of times in your Christian life? You're talking to someone and you see their problem and you're like, "Wait a minute, you've got to remember, God's sovereign. He's going to work this out for this good." You leave that conversation and you go over and something bad happens in your life and you immediately forget what you just told them. Because the Lord has made us to need someone else there to remind us. "Hey, God's sovereign in this situation." The godly person is one who is humble. That's the essence. Pouring spirit is the essence of the true believer, and we ought to grow in that. A selfishly ambitious, jealous, arrogant person is not growing in true wisdom.

4. Self-deceived

The fourth thing is they're self-deceived. He says, ***...do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*** The idea is this person who wants position, wants the first place, and thinks they have it all together spiritually. By their arrogance, by their jealousy, by their selfish ambition, they are showing that they are completely out of touch with reality and what they really are. They're lying against the truth, he says. Their life is a contradiction to their words. Their words are saying, "It's all about the Gospel," but their life is saying, "No, it's not all about the Gospel." To lie against the truth, what does this mean? I said earlier that we all ought to want to say with the apostle Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ." We all ought to be aspiring to be more and more like Jesus so that people behind us will want to follow us. We can follow those in front of us and we can rejoice in that. But if you say, as these teachers were saying in the church that James is talking about, "Follow me as I follow Christ," James is saying, "You say you follow Christ, and

you have none of the attributes of Christ. You say that you follow Christ, and where is the meekness? How can you be following Christ if you are arrogant? If you are selfishly ambitious? If you are jealous? That's not the Spirit of Jesus."

In 1 John 2, John is concerned to help people in that epistle as James is here to know how to walk in truth. He's telling us about the false teachers as well, but also about our own lives. He says:

1 John 2:6 ~ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

So the question is: Are we looking more like Jesus? Are we becoming meek and lowly, or are we still manifesting the attributes of the world? Jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance? If we think that we're doing so well that we're wanting to aspire to lead, to aspire to be in the first place, but our very character qualities are saying, "We're denying the Gospel."

5. Worldly

The fifth character quality that he gives of false wisdom can be found in Verse 15. He's given us four right now: Jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance, and lying, all in Verse 14. In Verse 15 he gives us the fifth character quality of false wisdom.

James 3:15 ~ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

Those three words basically give us one character quality, and they do it in a very powerful way. When Scripture says things in threes, it's always taken to the superlative, the highest order. So he basically says in these three different words, earthly, natural, and demonic, he's saying that false wisdom is worldly. False wisdom, though the person may be saying the right things, their attitudes are worldly, and they're showing that they don't have true wisdom. Either that they don't know Christ and possess true wisdom, or that they're not walking in true wisdom as a believer. Because when we have these characteristics of false wisdom, we are actually exhibiting that we are not walking in the wisdom from above, which is like Jesus, but we are walking in earthly wisdom. The first adjective here is earthly. The wisdom is earthly, natural, and demonic. Earthly, literally of the Earth, upon the Earth. That is not from Heaven, it's not from above, it's earthly.

The second word is natural. NAS translates this word as ‘natural’. The NIV and ESV translate it ‘unspiritual’. It’s a word from the word ‘psyche’ which is ‘soul’. Often the word ‘psyche’ is used to distinguish spiritual from natural, or to distinguish the part of man that we have in common with the animals. All animals are living souls is one of the concepts. Not souls in the way we have it, but they have a life force, a life that’s been given to them that’s been breathed into them, and so when he speaks of earthly, he means ‘psyche’, which is natural or unspiritual or animal-like. False wisdom is worldly in that it is of the earth and it’s animal-like. It’s like he uses these three adjectives, and they’re kind of in descending order. Think about this. The person claims to have heavenly wisdom, but in reality, their wisdom is earthly. It’s actually animalistic. It’s actually demonic. Do you see that? There’s this three-fold descent where he’s hammering home the fact that false wisdom is not at all of God. There’s nothing of grace in it. It’s the opposite. Earthly, natural, demonic.

The third adjective here is demonic, or of the devil, and literally it says ‘demon-like’ in the text. In fact, our word ‘demon’ is a transliteration of this Greek word, a letter for letter rendering of the Greek word *daimōn* (δαίμων). A demon is of course an evil spirit, a fallen angel, one of the many minions of Satan himself, of the kingdom of darkness. So he’s saying that when we exhibit false wisdom, we’re exhibiting a worldliness that is earthly, animalistic, and from hell itself. The idea of those things is that they’re cut off. Most of the time it’s because someone’s not saved that they’re cut off from that, but a person who’s walking after the flesh can also exhibit worldly wisdom, and they’ve cut themselves off from Spiritual wisdom. It’s exhibited in the fact that what you have in all three of these things is it’s all about self. It’s all about me. That’s the refrain of worldly wisdom. When something bad happens, we all have these thoughts, but the question is how quickly do you bring the Spirit into the situation? How quickly do you bring the truth into the situation?

We have to continually be bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The person who exhibits heavenly wisdom is a person who’s learning to do that. They have the same impulses of the flesh. When something bad happens, we always naturally think, “Why me? Why is this happening? Oh no. I’m wrestling with big things and little things. Why is that light turning red right now when I’m going through it?” Who really cares? What is the big deal? “But I want it to go right for me. That light turned red. If that guy in front of me hadn’t been going so slowly, we would have made it through.” That’s not a good thought process. The godly thing to do is say, “Wait a minute, Lord. What am I doing here? Am I

racing? What's happening here? Lord, it's about You." So you turn that around and you worship God with it.

The person who's characterized by false wisdom continues to stay in self. When something bad happens, it's always all about me. If something bad happens to you, it's about me. "This happened to you? Why did this happen to me? This is affecting me. It's all about me." That's the ungodly, worldly wisdom. "Why did they do this to me?" That's not true wisdom. So true wisdom is distinguished from false wisdom.

We're looking at the characteristics of false wisdom contrasted with the characteristics of true wisdom. If false wisdom looks like that, if it's jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance, self-deceit, and worldliness, then what does true wisdom look like?

2) How Do You Recognize True Wisdom?

James 3:17 ~ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

There we have seven adjectives in Verse 17 that describe the wisdom from above. Let's look at those:

1. Pure

The first attribute of wisdom from above is that it is pure. I actually like the way the NIV translates it. It says it's first of all pure, because in the Greek, there's a little more emphasis on the word 'first'. It says, "first" then "pure". So he's trying to really highlight the fact that this order is chosen with care, that the wisdom from above is first pure before it becomes these other things. These other things are actually an attribute or an outcome of the purity he's talking about. What does this word pure mean? It's important that we understand. It's a hard word to translate. Pure gets something of it, but I think there's more again. It's another word that starts in the heart, at the core of a man's being, that's exhibited outwardly in purity. It's a rich word. So, the word pure kind of deals with the outward manifestation of it, but originally the core idea is reverence and a Godward focus. The word originally meant 'to be free from defilement for worship, for cultic purposes.' This word pure means to be reverent and thoughtful of who God is and focus on our relationship with Him. And then it's a purity that flows from the heart. It's a purity

that starts on the inside and then comes out, much like meekness. It's a disposition of the heart that exhibits itself outwardly. The pure person is a person who fears God. The wisdom from above is first of all God-fearing, pure.

Isn't it interesting that that's exactly where Proverbs tells us wisdom begins? *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Proverbs 1:7). Wisdom begins with the fear of God. So the person who exhibits true wisdom is a person who is first of all reverent before God. Their life is focused on God, not themselves. It's not about me. It's about Him. It's about constantly remembering that it's not about me, it's about Him. "You stepped on my toes. It's not about me. It's about Him. Why did you allow this to happen, Lord? What's Your purpose? What's going on?" It's that kind of focus. When that is there first, everything else flows from that. So he says it's a Godward life. It's a 'coram deo' before the face of God, that the Puritans talked about, which is to live your life before the face of God, or to live as before an audience of One. There's only One Person that I'm living for right now to please, and that is God. It's not about the people around me, primarily. It's not about me. It's about Him. "Lord, what would be pleasing to You?" So the wisdom from above is first of all pure. Do you see how that's foundational for everything else?

2. Peaceable

Secondly, the wisdom from above is peaceable. It's peaceable or peaceful. It's disposed towards loving peace. This is the opposite of a person who's easily offended. This is a person who is hard to offend, because they're peaceable. It's interesting. We talked about the connection with leadership that James is making here. When you look at the list for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, it's amazing how much it relates to this disposition of peacefulness. 1 Timothy 3:3 says that an elder is not to be pugnacious. That means literally not a striker, not a puncher. That's the idea. If you're an elder and you're a puncher, it means you're ready for a fight. If a person's already ready for a fight and looking for a fight verbally, looking for something to jump on, that's not being peaceable.

In fact, he goes on to say in Titus 1:7 that an elder must not be self-willed or quick-tempered. Those are the qualifications for an elder. So it means that conflict is hard to come by, because this person is walking with a disposition towards peace. Where's that come from? It comes from a Godward focus. It comes from a Gospel centeredness. The reason we're at peace with one another is because we're at peace with God. And when you are remembering the Gospel, then wait a minute. My issue is not that somebody stepped on my toe, or that they took something that

belongs to me, something that I felt like I had or some turf, no. They may have genuinely offended, but wait a minute. Put it in light of the Gospel. Look how I've offended God. Look at the horrible offenses of my whole life, how I've spurned God and hated Him before I was converted, how I've spent my life living for myself, shaking my fist at God, and when I was ungodly, He loved me and set His affection upon me. He's made me at peace with Him. I'm no longer at enmity with Him. He's no longer at enmity with me. His wrath has been put away. He placed His wrath upon His Son Jesus Christ. He poured out His anger upon His own dear Son for every sin that I've ever committed. It was punished in Jesus at Calvary. When I see that, the magnitude of what God has done for me, how can I harbor your offense against me? It's all so small. So, living in light of God and our peace makes us peaceable. When I'm thinking about how sinful I am, how can I jump on you? When I'm thinking about how sinful I am and how grateful I am for His grace, how can I not be a dispenser of grace? The person who walks in the wisdom from above is peaceable. They're oriented toward peace. First pure, then peaceable, then gentle.

3. Gentle

Thirdly, the wisdom from above is gentle. This word gentle is different from the word translated as meekness. That's one of the reasons I think the NAS should have translated the first word meekness, so that we'd see the difference there in the English. It's not the same word. This word actually means gentle. It talks about the way you deal with people exclusively. It's the idea of fairness, equitability, to act in a fitting way. It's an intensified form of that kind of word which means essentially lenient and yielding. A person who's gentle like this is one who yields, who doesn't assert their rights. This is what James says we ought to be like. This is what we ought to aspire to, is to be a person who's not asserting their rights, a person that's not always recognizing offenses so quickly.

1 Corinthians 13 says that love hardly notices when others do it wrong. Hardly notices. Do you hardly notice when others do you wrong? James had said that first, pure is so important, the idea of reverence toward God. A Godward life flows into my peaceableness and also flows into my gentleness, because if I'm thinking about the Lord and I'm fearing Him, revering Him, and wanting to honor Him, it makes me gentle with other people.

Paul makes this exact connection between the fear of God and gentleness in Philippians 4:5. He uses the same word translated as gentle, here. It's translated as forbearing in Philippians 4:5, which says this:

Philippians 4:5 ~ Let your forbearing spirit be known to all. The Lord is near.

Do you see that? Do you see the force of that? “Let your forbearing spirit, let your gentle spirit be known to all.” It’s the fact that you’re yielding, the fact that you’re not recognizing so quickly when others offend you, and the fact that you’re gentle with other people when they trample on you. Why? Because the Lord is near. You see Him. We begin to want to jump on somebody, and then we look at One who is so meek and has been so gentle with us.

We shared a couple weeks ago that wonderful passage where Jesus says, “Come unto Me you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Now He’s saying, “Come unto Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart. I’m meek and lowly of heart.” The word is meek there. What does He mean? Why can you come unto Jesus? Think about this. We have offended Jesus Christ with every fiber of our being from the time we were conceived, until we came to Christ, and then as a believer, every time we sin, we offend His honor. We trample upon Him when we sin, but He says, “Come unto Me.” Why? “Because I’m meek and lowly.” He’s gentle. You can run to Him at any moment when you’ve sinned, because He is one who welcomes you in. He will make you holy and He will deal with you, but He loves you and receives you. When you look at that, you become like that. Let your forbearing spirit be known to all. The Lord is near. We’re not just pure, peaceable, and gentle, but fourthly, we’re also reasonable.

4. Reasonable

The wisdom from above is reasonable. The word here means to be easily persuaded. This really means that the person who exhibits heavenly wisdom is open and teachable. Literally, the word means ‘well persuaded’. The ESV says *...open to reason...* The KJV says *...easy to be entreated...* The NIV says *...submissive...* This means that we listen to others. We listen to correction when we have heavenly wisdom. How do you respond when others correct you? Do you pull back from them or do you receive it? Do you listen to it? If you pull back from correction, you’re not being reasonable and you’re not exhibiting heavenly wisdom.

James 1:19 ~ This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

We need to be pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, and then fifthly, we need to be full of mercy.

5. Full of Mercy and Good Fruits

The wisdom from above is full of mercy. The adjective ‘full’ means stuffed with. What is a person full of when they have heavenly wisdom? They’re full and overflowing with mercy. Mercy in the Scripture is active compassion. It’s so important to see the active nature of it. It’s not just compassion. Compassion means to feel with someone, to identify with their suffering, but mercy is active compassion. It moves to alleviate suffering. It is concern and pity in motion. It seeks to alleviate the misery caused by sin. A merciful person wants to help the person who’s suffering in sin. Even when they sin against you, mercy is you wanting to help them in their situation, not attack them, because you have received mercy. ***Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*** There’s a connection. When we receive mercy, we dispense it. When we dispense it, we prove that we’ve received it and that we’re going to receive it. So it’s first pure, then peaceable, then gentle, then reasonable, and then merciful.

6. Unwavering

The wisdom from above is unwavering. Really, I would say ‘impartial’ is a better translation of that word. The NIV translates it as impartial. Unwavering means to not show distinction, to not change your behavior towards someone based on differences, and to be impartial. So this person loves peace, and is gentle, reasonable, and merciful with everybody. This attitude is shown consistently to all people, not just a select few.

7. Not Hypocritical

The wisdom from above is not hypocritical. It’s without hypocrisy. In the Greek, it’s actually the word ‘hupokrités’ (ὕποκριτής) which is where we get our word hypocrite from. It means ‘no show’ and ‘no pretense’. The person that shows these qualities in their life is not putting on a show. It’s what’s coming from inside. The Lord is changing them from the inside out, and so their reverence toward God makes them peaceable. It makes them gentle and reasonable.

So, the character of false wisdom is wanting to be in first place, and reacting to every infraction. When someone makes an infraction against you, you’re jumping on it. You’re attacking it. When you see that in yourself and in others, it’s not heavenly wisdom. Heavenly wisdom, on the other hand, because it’s looking to

God, is naturally peaceable. It doesn't mean peace at all costs. Peace means that you help someone be at peace with God. That means you deal with sin in other people. It means that you're going to go to them when they're in sin and they need you to go to them, but you go in a different Spirit. You don't go, saying, "Why did you do this to me? Who do you think you are?" That's the spirit of worldly wisdom. Heavenly wisdom means going to another believer or brother in Christ and saying, "I see something in your life that I just want to talk to you about. I'm concerned about it." It serves the other person. Peaceable is gentle, and even there, it's gentle with them, reasonable, easily persuaded, open, teachable, and merciful. These are the characteristics of true wisdom versus the characteristics of false wisdom.

You can see the difference between true wisdom and false wisdom in the effects of true wisdom and false wisdom. We'll go through these quickly. The two effects of false wisdom are given in Verse 16:

James 3:16 ~ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Disorder is the first effect of false wisdom, and the second one is 'every evil thing'. Disorder is the idea of instability. It's a word that's used actually twice in James when he says the person who doubts is like a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. That's the same word here. Disorder. It's also in James 3:8 as 'restless evil'. It's the idea of the opposite of a state where things are settled and ordered. And so it means things are topsy-turvy. It's the idea of boiling water or percolating coffee. So the picture is that this is what happens when a person of false wisdom is in leadership in your life or in your church. This is what happens in the church. There's disorder. When a person who exhibits false wisdom is leading, what happens on the inside of their heart works its way out. The person has jealousy. Remember, the word jealousy means a restless state of mind. They have that in their heart, and then it comes out into their relationships, and into their life, and into the life of the church, because they're concerned about what's going on with them, what infractions are taking place. It comes out into the life of the church. There's disorder. There's no sense of harmony.

The second effect of false wisdom is 'every evil thing'. This means is all kinds of practices that are good for nothing. In fact, the word here really means good for nothing or worthless. It doesn't mean so much evil as in harmful, but evil as in worthless. False wisdom is good for nothing of eternal value. In contrast, look at

the effects of true wisdom. They're opposites. Disorder and every evil thing are the two effects of false wisdom.

The two effects of true wisdom are peace and righteousness. The word peace is such an important word in the passage. It's the third most important word in the passage after wisdom and meekness. It's there in Verse 17 as peaceable, and then twice in Verse 18:

James 3:18 ~ And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

When we make our attitude to sow peace, to have a quality of life that exhibits true wisdom, then the Lord gives us a harvest of righteousness and peace. Peace in the Bible is not just the absence of conflict, but is blessedness, wholeness. Everything is right with the world. There's harmony and well-being. This is what happens when we have leaders that are growing in this. This is what happens when we ourselves are working on this. There will be peace in our home. What's the environment in our home right now? Is it spiritual disorder or is it peace? And then there's not only peace, but righteousness, a harvest of righteousness. The seed whose fruit is righteousness I think is better translated by the ESV: ***...a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*** That is, everything that conforms to the will and character of God. When we make peace, when we labor to be at peace, when that's our heart and our disposition, and we're always working to walk in peace, he's saying it's like we're gardening. We're gardening righteousness and peace.

My father-in-law had a garden all his life. Patty was saying the other day that a lot of times people will tell her that their dad or granddad had a big garden, and they'll talk about it, and she's like, "Well, that's not the kind of garden that we had. We had a really big garden." Her dad would plant 150 tomato plants. That's a lot of tomatoes, and that was an average year. Sometimes there'd be 200. You can't eat that many tomatoes. We tried our best. Corn and tomatoes were the favorite things. And when I came into the family, I was like, "I have hit the mother lode right here." It was wonderful. There was corn and tomatoes and all the other vegetables too, but those were the two that I loved, and they didn't just happen. You don't just throw the seed down on the ground. You till the soil. My father-in-law was a master gardener even after Alzheimer's had done so much damage to him. He got to where he could not carry on a conversation or even form a sentence. He got to the place where he was speaking one word at a time. In the last 10 years of his life, Alzheimer's radically affected him. We were astounded by the fact that when it

came time to plant, he was over in the garden plowing the soil and planting his plants. Way after other things had left him, he was still able to do that. And after he had planted, he was over hoeing the weeds. You've got to keep the weeds out from your tomato plants so that your tomato plants aren't choked out by the weeds. A wonderful harvest comes when you till the soil and you do that hard work of laboring to plant, and then laboring to care for the plants, and then you bring in one of those beautiful tomatoes.

That's what James is saying is that when we labor to be people who have heavenly wisdom, when we put off jealousy and ambitious spirit, we put off the desire to be first. We put off the 'it's about me' mentality and we try to live before the face of God. We try to be content in the circumstances He's given to us. We try to be joyful in whatever things happen to us around us, and we develop meekness by His grace, but we're looking at Christ. If we work at that and we labor at that, we will reap a harvest. The harvest is much more wonderful than corn and tomatoes. It's much more pleasing to the soul. Peace and righteousness are what God wants for His people, and He's done everything necessary. If we do what we're supposed to do, by His grace, we will see the harvest. May God help us to do that.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we thank You for the power of the Gospel which brings us to peace with You, and enables us to live at peace with one another. We pray that You would help us, Lord, to repent of how often our lives do not exhibit the Gospel, and how often our lives can be a lie against the truth. Lord, forgive us for not being teachable, peaceable, and meek. Forgive us for being proud and unmerciful. Lord, may we see in the face of our Savior with ever increasing clarity, the wonder of love, mercy, compassion and loving kindness that You have shown and are showing to us, and let that be reflected in our character, in our actions, and in our relationships. May we exhibit the oneness of heaven. May we see a harvest of peace and righteousness. Father, we pray for those here who do not know peace with You, that You would help them see today their need to look to Christ, to see that He took the wrath of everyone who would ever believe. He paid our debt, that they might be at peace with You. Father, for those that may be struggling with bitterness and jealousy, help them this morning to put it off, to lay it aside, and to receive the wisdom from above. Give them Your grace to walk as Jesus walked. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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