

James 3:13-18 – Hell’s Wisdom or Heaven’s Wisdom?

Vincent, Ellsworth, TSK, Lexicon, Gaebelin, Rienecker, Adamson, Geneva, Robertson, Trapp, Poole, PNT, Family, Henry, Calvin, Clarke, Stott?

Beloved congregation of our Lord: From the last time you will remember Apostle James warned leaders to guard against the disease of censoriousness. Censoriousness is the **wrongful condemnation** of people or the **condemnation of people for small sins**. **This false condemning of others, Apostle James taught, was injurious to the kingdom of the Lord and it robbed God of his glory.**

Now **those who wrongfully condemned others (or condemn them for small things) were reflecting hell’s wisdom instead of heaven’s wisdom.** This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

You need wisdom to live for Jesus

Not Hellish wisdom

But Heavenly wisdom

Our goals: **That you will crave for and use true wisdom to make godly judgments before the world and bring honor to Jesus.**

You need wisdom to live for Jesus

13 Who is **wise** and **understanding** among you? Let him **show by good conduct** that his works are done in the **meekness** of wisdom.

1. Apostle James stated that those who thought they were wise and could make sound judgments about other people, ought to prove their abilities!

The proof was in the pudding. Saying they could make a good pudding was not enough. It had to taste good!

They had to show wisdom and understanding! *Wisdom and understanding* are used as synonyms.

“Wise” and “full of understanding” were words often used to refer to “rabbis,” Jewish teachers. But in reality, these rabbis did not always have true wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is a gift of God and often the rabbis were not children of God. Maybe they had knowledge, but they did not have wisdom, **just like the leaders in Apostle James’ day.**

2. These foolish leaders in the church were quick to condemn the poor, the widows, the orphans, and the foreigners.

They condemned them in these ways: “You are lazy.” “You don’t belong here.” “You’ve made bad decisions.”

3. If these leaders were wise, they would have shown meekness with the destitute, but in their arrogance, they assumed the worst.

They didn’t care about the evidence. They were arrogant because **they lacked the Holy Spirit** who makes men humble.

They should have looked to the good example of meekness in the Lord Jesus!

He saw **children** and welcomed them. He met with **alcoholics**. He showed mercy to the **poor**. He listened to the **prostitute**. He helped even a **Roman centurion** who was hated by the Jews. He didn’t assume the worst!

There was room in his kingdom for all kinds of people even the lowest ones!

Matthew 5:5 **Blessed are the meek**, For they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I **am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls.

4. Lessons:

a. There is a great difference between those who are pretending to be wise and those who are truly wise. Don’t be fooled. The price of being fooled can be deadly. You can harm your faith, your family, and your friends.

b. You will know a wise man, not only by the things he says, but also in the way he says it! He will not be arrogant. He will not talk down. The wise man’s words will be instructive and healing. His words will never advocate the harming of others but his words will promote the work of the kingdom of God.

(Of course you will see a wise man by wise actions as well! But that’s not the main point here.)

c. Knowledge without wisdom will make you proud. Knowledge with wisdom will humble you.

Not Hellish wisdom

14 But if you have **bitter envy** and **self-seeking** in your hearts, **do not boast** and **lie against the truth**.

1. These leaders showed their wisdom was from hell and they showed it in 3 ways.

a. Envy. These leaders were welcoming the rich into the church and ignoring the poor! They didn't have real wisdom but they had a lot of envy...and they thought that welcoming the rich was the smart way of getting some personal advantage. To them, wisdom was "what action would put more money in my pocket." **Can you imagine how this hurt the poor?**

b. Selfish ambition. Selfish ambition is working for oneself. So these foolish leaders welcomed the rich and ignored the poor. They condemned anyone who could not work for their advantage. **Can you imagine how this would have deceived and hurt the rich?** The wicked rich people needed truth – not accommodation! But the leaders were self-promoters. Hell's wisdom, which is no wisdom at all, is "lie to get your way."

c. Unending boasting and lying! This a continuous action. Boasting and lying flowed from envy and selfish ambition. **There was the desire to seem to be richer...or be self-promoters...**so they boasted! Hell's wisdom: Lie to get your way!

15 This wisdom does **not descend from above**, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

2. Apostle James characterized what these bad leaders had as wisdom, but it was only to mock them.

Their "wisdom" was **only wisdom by the standards of the world and they got their wisdom from their father - Satan!** Hell's wisdom is foolishness.

John 8:44 "**You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, **because there is no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, **he speaks from his own resources**, for he is a liar and the father of it.

They spoke, not the truth, but whatever would give them what they wanted. They **lived for their bellies...**their comforts!

Philippians 3: 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the **enemies of the cross of Christ**: 19 whose end is destruction, **whose god is their belly**, and whose glory is in their shame — who **set their mind on earthly things**.

16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, **confusion** and every evil thing are there.

3. This world's wisdom always ends in disorder and sinful practices.

This world's wisdom leads to anarchy and spiritual turmoil. Disorder. Disturbance. Trouble. In the situation in our text, it led to exclusion of the godly and in inclusion of the ungodly in the church. It led to abandoning the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners. It led to a weakening of the church and robbing Christ of his worship.

Worldliness, one man wrote, is the negating of godly wisdom. No wonder confusion comes.

4. Lessons:

a. The foolish man who speaks arrogantly may think he is wise, but he is full of harmful words and works. Stay away from him. Don't marry him. He may have a bad father – the Devil! Or, it maybe he has left the Devil's home (and in new Father's home) but he hasn't completely left his old father's ways! He will lead you into sin.

b. If you claim to be a man or woman of wisdom and knowledge, see that you show the world by living a godly life.

c. Think now of all the TV preachers who don't want to talk about sin anymore...but of health, wealth, and happiness! Many of them do that because of what they could get from the people! These men lack wisdom. Avoid them. They will make you physically and spiritually poor.

d. Set your mind on heavenly wisdom, not on your belly. Let that be a guide of your words and actions!

But Heavenly wisdom

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

1. God's wisdom was what the people of Apostle James' day needed!

Why? Because God's wisdom was:

a. Pure. God's wisdom is free from any corrupt motive. It means having sincere moral and spiritual integrity, not half-good, and not half-bad. It is pure! This stands in contrast to envy, selfish ambition, and lying. (Remember how the leaders in the church would welcome the rich man because he could bring personal advantage to them!) Not so with the godly wise! God's glory is on their minds!

b. Peaceable. Wise Christians aren't bitter and envious. They shouldn't have selfish ambition. Envy and selfish ambition create chaos. True wisdom promotes peace between an angry God and sinful man by the blood of the Savior.

c. Gentle. Wise Christians are reasonable in judging. Wisdom does not allow Christians to become extremists. Christians could be easily persuaded to do good and persuaded to run away from evil.

d. Humble. Instead of being obstinate, Christians must be ready to yield to other people's needs. They are approachable. This word literally means to "submit to military discipline."

e. Full of mercy and good fruits. Christians were to look to forgive someone who wronged them. They offer "practical help," as opposed to only helping people who can give them something back. Wisdom requires that Christians love all clean things!

Matthew 7:16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

f. Without partiality. Wise Christians must show no partiality and must not ignore the poor. People of different racess, social status, or nationalities are to be treated without partiality. That is hurtful!

g. Without hypocrisy. Christians had to be sincere. They have no cracks that are hidden and painted over!

2. As you can see here, Apostle James was insisting that wisdom was not a feeling in the head, or a large amount of education, but wisdom was practical - seen and experienced.

What a contrast these actions are from the world's wisdom, which was no wisdom at all!

3. God is the only source of this true wisdom.

Any other wisdom is false and comes from the Devil. Everything is viewed from this world – not from the vantage point of heaven and a holy God.

Proverbs 2: 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding...

18 Now the **fruit of righteousness is sown** in peace by those who make peace.

4. When that fruit of righteousness (which flows from wisdom) is sown, its fruits is peace!

The more it is sown, the better the crop of righteousness! There is no bitterness!

5. Lessons:

a. Make it your goal in life to be wise and to produce righteousness... righteousness that is demonstrable. (This is the theme of James.)

Jesus said that **wisdom is justified by her children**, meaning the produce...
Wisdom produces righteousness.

b. The world's wisdom says those who live simply and peaceably are miserable, so reject the world's wisdom because you know better. There is no greater joy in life than living in peace and simplicity!

c. Sow righteousness (based on wisdom) with zeal...like the Lord had zeal.

Psalm 69: 9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

Use your wisdom to bring men and women into his house to worship and glorify him.

Conclusion:

You need wisdom - heavenly wisdom- to live well and speak well – not the hellish, selfish wisdom from the Devil. Wisdom will make you sow righteousness and reap a 10, 25, 100-fold of righteousness!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Watch out if you are selfish – self-serving. This will cause you to crush those who can't help you and make you lie to others who can! That is the world's wisdom.

2. Remember you were saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. You have to live for him. Live wisely. Ask him for heavenly wisdom. Use your heavenly wisdom to bring glory to your Savior.

3. Remind the world they need God's wisdom or they will die in their selfishness and spend eternity in hell.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you only have this world's wisdom that leads to envy, selfish-ambition and lying, which ultimately leads to hell. But if you ask God to forgive your sins since Jesus died for sinners, he will not only save you from hell, but he will also give you wisdom to live for his glory and take you to heaven one day.