

# Walking in Wisdom – Part 4

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – James instructs his audience to work out their faith in wisdom and understanding
2. aim – to cause us to put aside selfish ambition and to seek the wisdom from above in all things
3. passage – James 3:13-18

### b. outline

1. The Place of Wisdom (James 3:13)
2. The Perversion of Wisdom (James 3:14-16)
3. The Purity of Wisdom (James 3:17-18)

### c. opening

1. the **opening** of the sermon
  - a. **note:** the number of *high-profile* individuals in recent days who have been forced to issue *apologies* to people that they have “offended” with perfectly *innocuous* statements or associations
    1. **e.g.** in all disciplines: sports, politics, entertainment, industry, even high-profile *pastors* apologizing (or sermonizing) to “clarify” their commitment to certain social issues, etc.
  - b. which points to the reality that our culture is now based *almost entirely* on **emotionalism** – that “feelings” are ultimately what determine true and false or right and wrong, making navigating the “perpetually offended” virtually impossible (**e.g.** woman crying when receiving Trump mailer)
    1. **i.e.** what *used to be* confined to “safe spaces” on college campuses: the “lie” spun from hell that, *as an autonomous being*, your “feelings” trump everything else – **thinking is dead!**
  - c. but, the Christian religion (espoused by every N.T. writer) is *not* based on emotionalism, but on **wisdom** – the Christian is to walk in an understanding of what God has **revealed**
2. the **content** of the pericope (**faith = transformed understanding of ourselves and others**)
  - a. first, a **rhetorical question** (v. 13a): who is wise and understanding amongst you (all of us!)
  - b. second, an **imperative** (v. 13b): the believer is to walk “*in the meekness of wisdom*”
  - c. third, the **opposite** (vv. 14-16): the nature of “wisdom” in the mind and heart of the reprobate
  - d. **now**, the **application** (vv. 17-18): the nature of **Godly wisdom** that should permeate the **life** of the person who *claims* to have faith in Christ (**i.e.** to walk in wisdom)
    1. the **application** of the imperative in v. 13b – the **characteristics** of a “work” of wisdom
    2. the **first characteristic** of this wisdom: it is “*pure*” – it comes from One who *is pure*, it is pure because it *reveals God’s mind perfectly*, and it has a *singular (pure) intention* in the life of those to whom it is given – the **remaining six characteristics** flow from this one ...

## III. The Purity of Wisdom (James 3:17-18)

### Content

#### b. the characteristics of pure wisdom (v. 17b)

1. all are **adjectives** (**i.e.** descriptive words which modify and/or clarify an object; **e.g.** a *tall* man)
  - a. each *clarifies* an element of what it means to walk in the wisdom from above – these are how wisdom **operates in relation to other people**, especially those *who don’t think God’s thoughts*
  - b. **i.e.** how do we navigate a world of people who *do not* share a wisdom from above?
  - c. **thesis: the true Christian understands that what God has revealed is pure, and he interacts with others in that purity – he does not “embrace” their foolishness, but holds fast to a way of thinking and interacting that is consistent with what God has revealed:**
2. “*peaceable*” (*eirēnikē*) = free from worry; a way of thinking that is not subject to anxiety
  - a. **contrast:** emotionalism is *constantly* worried about what other people think (**see above**)
  - b. from the root for peace (*eirēne*) = not: the cessation of hostilities; rather: a new relationship between parties that causes them to interact with one another as friends or allies (**e.g.** the *adopted* state of the believer as sons and daughters of God makes them at peace)
    1. the Christian, *knowing that he is in a state of peace with God*, is *unconcerned* about how others “feel” about him, or about how others “feel” about that which “centers” his life (**i.e.** the gospel)
    2. **LOW:** the born-again person is *only* concerned with what God “feels” about him
  - c. **the wisdom of God is the exact opposite of “selfish ambition” (v. 14); therefore, those who walk in wisdom are unconcerned about how they are perceived by the world**

3. “gentle” (*epieikēs*) = equitable; considerate; a way of thinking taking into account the value of others
    - a. **note:** the “flip side” of the *peaceable* coin – while walking in the wisdom of God makes one *unworried* about the view of the world, it also *respects* others and responds *gently* to them
    - b. **IOW:** while we do not embrace the thinking of the world, we do attempt to *change* that thinking, but in ways that are gentle and reverent (**1 Peter 3:14-15**)  
“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with *gentleness* and *respect* ...”
    - c. **the wisdom of God reveals that all men are his image-bearers; therefore, those who walk in wisdom seek to win others over not with insults or anger, but with a spirit of respect**
  4. “open to reason” (*eupeithēs*) = (**only here**) easily persuaded; submissive; compliant; open minded
    - a. **note:** difficult to translate, but *clearly not* meaning “open minded” in the sense of *embracing whatever comes along* (e.g. churches being “open minded” = willing to *accommodate* any belief)
    - b. **possibly:** a willingness to learn more about what God has revealed; a desire to know more about the revelation of God as found in Scripture through the means provided
      1. **i.e.** open to hearing and learning; not: “my mind’s made up, don’t confuse me with the facts”
    - c. **probably:** a willingness to listen to others *even when they don’t think like we do*
      1. the context suggests this is an *interpersonal* discussion (**i.e.** how we relate to *others*)
      2. **IOW:** even the reprobate (under the common grace of God) do *sometimes* think things that are good and right and worthy of consideration, and we should be open to hearing them
        - a. true, generally, the reprobate think foolishly (e.g. **Gorsuch in the Bostock decision**)
        - b. but, *without embracing their false beliefs*, it is good to listen to others who disagree with us
    - d. **the wisdom of God clarifies why the world thinks as it does; therefore, those who walk in wisdom are not overcome by it, but distinguish truth from lie in the thinking of others**
  5. “full of mercy and good fruits” = flowing with mercy and love toward those who despise God
    - a. **note:** an adjectival *compound* of the wisdom from above – the wisdom of God is “full of,” which means it is *merciful* and *fruitful* (**i.e.** a *complex* adjective)
    - b. **question:** how does the true Christian respond to the *hatred* of the world towards him?
      1. or, how does a Christian *emulate God*, who is hated by the whole world due to the Fall?
      2. **IOW:** if we are to walk *in the wisdom of God*, how do we react *like God* when faced with hatred?
    - c. **answer:** where the world only wants to live *in wrath*, the believer brings *mercy* (**Rom. 12:18ff**)  
“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
      1. remember: the Cross is the ultimate act of mercy, delivered by God *through their wrath*
    - d. **the wisdom of God is based on the reality of a day of judgment; therefore, those who walk in wisdom leave it to the Lord to “sort out” all of the injustices of life**
  6. “impartial” (*adiakritos*) = (**only here**) not prejudiced; unwavering; straightforward; indistinguishable
    - a. (**again**) **note:** difficult to translate, but *clearly not* meaning “just like everyone else” in the sense of treating all knowledge equally (**i.e.** the failure to take a stand for something *specific*)
    - b. **probably:** as was discussed in **chap. 2** re: **partiality** – not taking “sides” with others based on their position or power or persuasiveness – being *impartial* regardless of external “force”
      1. **e.g.** the tendency of Americans to listen to “celebrities” as experts
    - c. **the wisdom of God is based on his standard of knowledge; therefore, those who walk in wisdom are not swayed by the powers of this world**
  7. “sincere” (*anypokritos*) = without hypocrisy; genuine; without *duplicity*; single in focus
    - a. **probably:** the *point-word* of the list = faith must be *demonstrated* by our actions; to trust in God is to be *transformed* in every respect based on our understanding of what God has promised
      1. therefore, to walk in wisdom is to be *consistent* between our understanding and our actions
      2. **i.e.** if we *know* what God has revealed about himself, his purposes, his intentions *in us* (his purity), then we must *sincerely* and *consistently* hold to what he has revealed
    - b. **the wisdom of God is utterly consistent, coming from a pure mind; therefore, those who walk in wisdom must demonstrate sincerity in their beliefs in the face of opposition**
- c. the results of pure wisdom (v. 18)**
1. “harvest of righteousness” = the **goal** of the purity of wisdom from above: *holiness* and *sinlessness*
    - a. James uses (**again**) a simple illustration to make his point: as we interact with others under the wisdom of God (not of the world) we “sow” peace between ourselves and others
      1. true, many will get their “feelings hurt” as we speak the truth, but we are not pursuing an *emotional response*, since emotions are often misleading – we speak *transcendent truth*
      2. thus, we “harvest” true righteousness in ourselves – we listen to the revelation of God and learn from it, and we interact with others not out of “selfish ambition,” but out of deep concern for their “standing” before God, which *transforms us into the image of the ultimate Peacemaker*

2. application: to walk in the wisdom from above is to live humbly before the Lord and others, to seek the best welfare of those around us, and not captured by the “wisdom” from below
  - a. *this is the essence of sanctification and glorification*

## Graduation Gifts