

Wisdom

James 3:13-18

A 70-year-old retired Military officer had one hobby - he loved to fish.

He was sitting in his boat one day when he heard a voice say, 'Pick me up.' He looked around and couldn't see anyone.

He thought he was dreaming when he heard the voice say again, 'Pick me up.' He looked in the water and there, floating on the top, was a frog.

The retired officer said, 'Are you talking to me?'

The frog said, 'Yes, I'm talking to you. Pick me up, then kiss me; and I'll turn into the most beautiful woman you have ever seen. I'll make sure that all your friends are envious and jealous, because I will be your bride!'

The retired officer looked at the frog for a short time, reached over, picked it up carefully and placed it in his shirt pocket.

The frog said, 'What, are you nuts? Didn't you hear what I said?' I said, 'Kiss me, and I will be your beautiful bride.'

He opened his pocket, looked at the frog and said 'Nah. At my age, I'd rather have a talking frog.'

Today's topic is wisdom...there was a lot of wisdom in that story!

When we talk about wisdom we have to acknowledge the wisest man of all time, Solomon. The source of his wisdom is told in:

1 Kings 3:5-12, "At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

6 Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

7 "Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. 8

Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be."

The wisdom that Solomon was blessed with was to be a wise ruler of the nation of Israel, but that wisdom did not apply to other areas of his life.

James's 7th test of our faith is: Where does your wisdom come from?

First, James tells us about:

- I. The 2 kinds of wisdom vs. 13-14

James 3:13-14, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth."

James links wisdom with understanding. This wasn't new to his readers. The author of Proverbs writes in:

Proverbs 4:7, "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding."

Wisdom without understanding simply cultivates arrogance. Notice how different it is from the wisdom found in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:30, "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

What we realize here is that wisdom was not intellectualism, rather it is evident in our behavior.

James says, "Let them show it" which is in the imperative sense meaning it is a command. He says

show it in your deeds which are done in humility. The word for humility here could be translated gentleness or meekness, but whichever word you use it holds the sense of 'power under control.'

So, wisdom from God is evident in deeds done in humility. While earthly wisdom reveals motivations of selfishness. The true condition and desires of the heart are revealed in our actions which reveal the source of our wisdom.

The words 'bitter envy' or jealousy has the idea of being prickly or sharp. You're like a cactus. Then the words 'selfish ambition' holds the idea of strife, contentiousness and extreme selfishness.

Let's explore this a little more:

- II. Wisdom of the world vs. 15-16
 - a. Its description vs. 15

James 3:15, "Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic."

Here James reveals the three enemies of the believer. The first is the world, the things around us. The second is our own flesh and the third is the devil who is the source of earthly wisdom.

Paul warns us about Satan in:

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough."

"13 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

Paul also warns Timothy with these words in:

1 Timothy 4:1, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."

If we stay faithful to the pursuit of Godly wisdom God has provided all we need to succeed. No matter what the source of the attack is we can have victory.

We have the Holy Spirit living in us to give victory over the flesh. So how about the influence of the world around us? Peter reminds us that Noah lived in a world of sinful influence, but he stayed faithful ultimately saving his family and humanity.

Peter goes on to tell how Lot stayed faithful while living in Sodom & Gomorrah. When all else died God saved Lot and his children. Peter describes it like this:

2 Peter 2:9, “if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.”

God will rescue the godly! God can rescue you!

b. Its results vs. 16

James 3:16, “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

Again, James repeats the end of earthly wisdom is envy and selfish ambition. And where you have envy and selfishness it leads to disorder, instability... Remember James 1:8? That person is double minded and unstable in all his ways.

“Every evil practice” is the broadest possible category of all these bad things.

III. The wisdom from God is: vs. 17

James 3:17, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

Wisdom from God is pure. The idea of purity here is being free of contamination or defilement. Have you ever known someone who got lice in their home? How about fleas? That’s contamination. Everything has to be washed. All clothing must be washed, and you have to get the closets and dressers cleaned out before putting anything back or you must start all over again.

Purity means there is no lice, there is no sin, nothing is defiled.

James then rattles off a list of qualities, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful and bears good fruit, impartial...you remember that from James 2:1-9 and showing favoritism and finally without hypocrisy.

IV. Faith brings righteousness & peace vs. 18

James 3:18, "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

The concept of what is sown here is godly wisdom and godly wisdom produces righteousness and peace.

Romans 11:33-36, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" 36 For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

God is God, He is the source of all wisdom and truth. If we rely on Him and the Holy Spirit which He gave us to be able to connect to His wisdom we will walk in His ways.

So, part of wisdom is using the tools God has given us to succeed. So far in James we have been given 7 tests to examine our faith. Here is your mid-term exam.

1. Do we demonstrate perseverance in suffering?
2. Who do we blame when we endure temptation?
3. How do we respond to God's Word?
4. Is our love impartial?
5. Do we have righteous works?
6. Does your tongue reflect your faith?

And today's test:

7. Where does your wisdom come from?