

Salt Church
James 3:13-18
“Wisdom From Above”
August 30, 2026
The Fruit of Salvation

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Recap

James 3:1-12

- James reminded us that the “calling” on pastors, elders, and teachers brings a stricter judgment as compared to those who do not teach.
 - The reason for this stricter judgment is the influence that teachers have on their students.
- From that launching point, James spoke to us about the power of the tongue.
 - It’s ability to be a blessing and a curse.
 - It’s inability to have self-control.
 - It’s ability to bring great destruction and...
- We transitioned from the tongue to discover that the tongue isn’t the real issue
 - The real issue is the heart
 - Jesus said in Matthew and Luke that the overflow of a man’s heart will spill out of his mouth
 - So, we concluded that we need a new heart from God
 - A heart that honors and loves Him

- A heart that loves others
- A heart that is dedicated to pursuing Him
- A heart for making disciples
- We closed with this final reminder from James 3
 - That a fresh water spring cannot produce salty water
 - Nor can a bitter well produce good water

Today, James will leave the tongue and transition back to the motivation of our works:

James 3:13-18 (NKJV) “Word for word”

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you?

Let him show by **good conduct** that his **works are done** in the meekness of **wisdom**. ***¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.***

¹⁵ This **wisdom** does not descend from **above**, but is **earthly, sensual, demonic**. ***¹⁶ For where envy and self-***

seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. ***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.*** ***¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.***

James 3:13-18 (NLT) “Thought for thought”

¹³ If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. ***¹⁴ But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with***

boasting and lying. ¹⁵ For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. ¹⁸ And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

Prayer

James 3:13-18 (NKJV)

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you?

- What a great question.
 - How do we know who is wise and who is not wise?
 - ***By their decisions and actions.***

Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

- James, through the power of the Holy Spirit, says that wisdom is proved by **what we do (works)** and **the manner** in which we do our works.
 - That's interesting to me.
 - What does James mean when he says, **"done in the meekness of wisdom"**?

- I think if James were here today, he would remind us that there is a difference between being smart and being wise.
 - Smart people retain knowledge
 - Wise people apply knowledge
 - Allow me to say this in a different way:
 - ***True wisdom is not intellectual***
 - ***True wisdom is behavioral***

The great philosopher Forrest Gump said, “Stupid is as stupid does.”

- I think he was on to something

According to God:

- Wise and understanding people **prove** that they are such by **holding to good conduct** while **doing good works** through the **meekness of wisdom**.
 - **This means** that a wise person understands that wisdom is a gift from the Lord and therefore there is no room for pride.
 - **This means** wise people hold to good conduct **(there is a lot of peace in walking in righteousness)**.
 - **This means** wise people do good works with meekness.
 - In other words, **they don't feel the need to let broadcast their good works**.

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

- “Bitter envy”
 - This is more than jealousy.

- There is an anger component to it.
 - This anger component is fueled by selfishness which the Holy Spirit says is a heart issue.

“Do not boast and lie against the truth.”

- What in the world is going on within this church?
 - We cannot forget that this letter is addressed to the early church.
- **Boasting** is the process in which we build ourselves up in front of others.
 - It is very ugly.
 - It is seen most frequently in the world of professional sports and politics.
 - But we don’t think about leaders within the church, or members, boasting and lying to gain position.
 - **But it happens.**
 - We must remember that church is full of sinners.
 - The difference between the church and the world is that we deal with our sin through accountability, confession, and repentance.

When we boast and lie, it is called earthly wisdom.

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

- **“Sensual?”**

- I understand it not being from above.
- I understand it being earthly and demonic, but sensual?
 - What does James know that we don't?
- The New Living Translation says “unspiritual” rather than “sensual”
- The LSB translates it “natural”
 - So, what do we do?
 - We go to the Greek
 - **Transliteration:** psuchikos
 - Phonetic Spelling:** (psoo-khee-kos')
 - KJV:** natural, sensual
 - NASB:** natural, worldly-minded
 - **Word Origin**
from [psuché](#) (Its where we get psyche)
 - Definition**
natural, of the soul or mind
 - NASB Translation**
natural (5), worldly-minded (1).

What does all of this mean?

- It simply means that it is not from God.
- Its origin is from man or below.
 - It means that when you do this **you are thinking like an animal**.
 - The problem is that you are not an animal.
 - You were created by God in the image of God
 - The animals were spoken into existence
 - But man was formed from the dust of the earth

- God breathed life into the man through his nostrils.
 - This is exclusive to man.
 - Therefore, we conclude that God has a higher expectation for man.

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

- *“bitter envy and self-seeking”*
- *“boasting and lying against the truth”*
 - Earthly not from God

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

New International Version

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

New Living Translation

For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

English Standard Version

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

Disorder is not from God

- When the Holy Spirit takes control of a person or a church He always brings order.
 - He is not the author of confusion!

disorder and every vile practice.

This is not what the child of God has been called to!

- Nor is this what Jesus gave His life for
- Because Jesus died for us, we too have been crucified with Christ
 - Meaning we see sin (especially our sin) differently.

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

Romans 6:6

"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing."

2 Corinthians 5:15

"And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."

Luke 9:23

"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

John 12:24

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Dying to self is an absolute must for every child of God

- I am glad that this is written to the church
 - So many times people leave the church because they find out that the church is full of sinful people
 - That is like leaving the hospital because there are sick people there.
- With that said, allow me to say this:
 - If your leaders are sick, it needs to be addressed
 - You do not need to sit under a pastor or an elder that is engaged in unrepentant sin.
 - You do not need to sit under a pastor or an elder that does not teach truth
 - But you are expected to pour grace on these men as they are human
 - And I will say that all of us are responsible not only to the Lord, but to each other.
 - In other words, it is not the sole responsibility of church leaders to go to church members when we find them in sin.
 - Jesus says in Matthew 18 that if you find your brother in sin, you go to him in private.

In the end, wisdom from below produces:

- Bitter envy
- Boasting
- Lying
- Self-centeredness
- Confusion
- And every evil thing

Now that we know what wisdom from below looks like, let's look at what wisdom from above looks like:

Proverbs 9:10

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

- **First, let's be clear** that this is the strongest Hebrew word for fear.
 - It is the Hebrew word "Yirah"
 - It means dreadful, exceedingly, fearfulness
- Pastor, why would God want us to fear Him in this way, and how could this lead to wisdom?
 - Isn't God love?
 - **Love is exactly where we need to start.**
 - God has many attributes; among these are two very important attributes:
 - Love
 - Justice
 - God will not sacrifice one attribute for another
 - (This is where a lot of preachers get off track)

- They teach that God loves all and accepts all without any call to holiness.
 - Without any call to sanctification
 - Just come as you are and stay as you are!

Allow me to ask you a question:

- If God's only attribute was love, why would He nail His one and only Son to the cross?
 - (No man that loves his son would nail him to a tree)
 - So, why did God the Father, who is love, nail His Son to a tree?
 - ***Because He is also a just God.***
 - Justice requires punishment for law breakers
 - Because justice requires punishment for law breakers and God is just, He must punish sinners.
 - “For the wages of sin is death.”
 - “Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness.”
- **What kind of judge would not punish murder, rape, molestation, and still be considered just?**
 - This is why our just God punished sin on the cross.
 - Jesus paid the penalty for all of the sins of those who would place their faith, hope, and trust in Him.
 - Therefore, God is just in His punishment

- He is also loving in that His judgment was carried out upon His sinless Son who paid our penalty.

Our conclusion is this:

- ***Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*** because the whole earth will one day stand before the Judge.
 - This Judge will show grace and mercy to those who placed their faith, hope, and trust in Jesus.
 - They did this because they understand that God is just in His punishment of sinners.
 - He is just in sentencing sinners to an eternity in Hell.
 - **Therefore, the only people who do not fear the Lord's just punishment are those who are unwise.**

So, what does wisdom from above look like?

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure,

- The Greek word there implies sincere, moral, spiritual character.
- They have pure hearts who desire to do God's will.
 - Matthew 5:8 "Jesus said"
 - ***"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."***

then peaceable,

- peace-loving
- peace-promoting

- Matthew 5, Jesus said,
 - *“Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.”*
 - The wisdom from God does not create confusion.
 - It does not create disorder.
 - It is not self-promoting.
 - It is peace-loving, peace-making.
 - It doesn't come to an unholy truce – it does not compromise the truth - but it makes peace.

gentle,

- This is part of the redeemed character of godly wisdom:
 - It is humbly patient
 - Steadfastly gentle
 - It submits to
 - dishonor, (Jesus was called to submit to dishonor)
 - disgrace,
 - mistreatment,
 - persecution with an attitude of humility,
 - Godly wisdom has,
 - an attitude of kindness,
 - an attitude of patience,
 - an attitude of consideration,
 - Godly wisdom is,
 - without hatred,
 - without malice,
 - without revenge.

Jesus said these words: (Matthew 5:11)

“Blessed are you when you are persecuted, when you are reviled, when men say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the ones who are persecuted for righteousness sake are the ones who inherit the Kingdom.”

Godly wisdom is:

willing to yield,

- Willing to yield and...
 - not stubborn
 - easily persuaded
 - teachable
 - compliant
- **The opposite would be**
 - stubborn, obstinate, disobedient.

Jesus said it this way:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

Godly wisdom is:

full of mercy

- Concerned for people who suffer
- Reaches out to people with compassion who are in suffering

Jesus said it this way:

Matthew 5:7

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

Godly wisdom has!

and good fruits,

- This simply means good works, a wide variety of spiritual deeds.
- This is the person whose life is demonstrated in good deeds,
 - the works that are produced by faith

Jesus said it this way (Matthew 5)

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled.”

Godly wisdom is:

without partiality

- This is the person who never wavers,
- This is the true-hearted, wholehearted, absolutely sincere person who moves out in faithfulness to God.

Jesus said it this way

- This is the person who lets ***“their light shine consistently before men who, in seeing their good works, can glorify their Father in heaven.”***
- They have a unwavering commitment, without partiality, never making distinctions in persons.

Godly wisdom is:

and without hypocrisy.

- utterly sincere,
- genuine,
- not phony,
- not fake,
- no pretense,
- no mask,
- no hypocrisy!

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

- “The fruit of righteousness”
 - **Righteousness is equated with true wisdom**
 - because wisdom is righteous living
- “And the fruit of this righteousness is sown”
 - Where you have true wisdom equal true righteousness
 - the true righteousness that is being worked out is fruit.
 - But that true righteousness **which is fruit** becomes **seed** and **generates even more** true righteousness.
 - It continues to grow exponentially

In the end we conclude:

- **True wisdom is not a matter of how much a person knows, but rather, it is how much a person trusts God.**

I want to close today with Proverbs 8

Proverbs 8

8 Does not wisdom call out?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

**²At the highest point along the way,
where the paths meet, she takes her stand;**

**³beside the gate leading into the city,
at the entrance, she cries aloud:**

**⁴“To you, O people, I call out;
I raise my voice to all mankind.**

**⁵You who are simple, gain prudence;
you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.**

**⁶Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say;
I open my lips to speak what is right.**

**⁷My mouth speaks what is true,
for my lips detest wickedness.**

**⁸All the words of my mouth are just;
none of them is crooked or perverse.**

**⁹To the discerning all of them are right;
they are upright to those who have found knowledge.**

**¹⁰Choose my instruction instead of silver,
knowledge rather than choice gold,**

**¹¹for wisdom is more precious than rubies,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.**