

True Wisdom

James 3:13-18

Introduction

- MacArthur notes, this passage “makes a transition from discussing teachers and the tongue to dealing with wisdom’s impact on everyone’s life. He supports the truth revealed in the Old Testament wisdom literature (the book of Job to the Song of Solomon) that wisdom is divided into two realms – man’s and Gods, earthly and heavenly... James offers wisdom as still another test of living faith. The kind of wisdom a person possesses will be revealed by the kind of life he [or she] lives. Those who possess the wisdom of man, the wisdom from below, will demonstrate by their lives that they have no saving relationship with Jesus Christ and no desire to worship, serve or obey Him. On the other hand, those who possess genuine saving faith will manifest the wisdom of God, the wisdom from above.”
- Broadly defined: Wisdom – is not simply a matter of possessing factual knowledge but of properly and effectively applying truth to everyday life.

Two Kinds of Wisdom (3:13-18)

- QUESTION: How important are the things you think about (and dwell upon)? Are they True?
- Before you answer think about Philippians 4:8 NASB, which says “*finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*”
- Paul taught: “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1:25 NASB)” and “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Wisdom is Humble (3:13)

- (v. 13) A person that is wise and understanding is humble, meek, and gentle. MacArthur reminds us: the Greeks would describe gentleness as ‘power under control’.

- Jesus is our greatest example of gentleness and was a man filled with wisdom and understanding.
- So, where is wisdom found in the character and nature of God, the life of Jesus, the constant working of the Holy Spirit, and the complete Word of God!

Wisdom is Gracious (3:14-16)

- (v. 14) True 'wisdom' makes no room for 'bitter envy' or for 'selfish ambition'. To boast in such attitudes is to basically 'lie' to the Truth (deny the Truth).
- Remember the importance of what we 'say in our hearts': Psalms contrasts this often, here is one comparison: the "*fool says in their heart, 'There is no God'*" (Ps. 53:1) versus "*He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart*" (Ps. 15:2).
- KEY POINT: What we think about is expressed in our words, attitudes, and behaviors. If we are constantly thinking about God and his wisdom, then we will notice an immediate change in our words, attitudes, and behaviors!!

Wisdom is Peaceable (3:17-18)

- (v. 17) Wisdom from heaven is unlike anything on this earth!
- Consider the truth of this point James is making God's wisdom is pure (holy), peace-loving (forbearing), submissive (easy to be entreated or asked/implored), full of mercy and good fruit, and impartial (without wavering or hypocrisy).
- (v. 18) The truly wise man is a man of peace. The actual 'fruit' of peace is righteousness!

Conclusion

- Overall, Scripture and ancient philosophers considered wisdom as extremely important in life.
- *Sophos* is the common Greek word for speculative knowledge and philosophy, but the Hebrews infused it with the much richer meaning of skillfully applying knowledge to the matter of practical living.
- The Hebrews to whom James wrote understood that true wisdom was not intellectual, but behavioral. Thus, the biggest fool was one who know truth and failed to apply it. To the Jews, wisdom meant skill in living righteously.
- Psalms 111:10 NASB says "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever."