

James 3:13-18

- Intro:**
- After a first reading of these verses, are there any other similar portions of Scripture that come to your mind?
 - The same questions asked concerning the previous section (3:1-12) must be asked concerning this paragraph:
 - Is James addressing Christian individuals in general?
 - Or is James addressing the collective community of Christians with primary reference to the teachers (3:1) within that church/Body?
- Vs. 13**
- Is the initial question asked by James, “Who is wise and understanding among you?”...
 - a direct, straight-forward question asked generally of all Christian readers?
 - an indirect and facetious question asked particularly concerning self-appointed teachers?
 - By whose evaluation are these persons considered “wise and understanding”?
 - their own?
 - the community?
 - God’s?
 - If James is referring to teachers (3:1) who are “wise in their own eyes” (cf. Prov. 3:7), are these the same persons who advocated “belief-only” or “easy-believism” (2:14,18-20), thinking that mental assent to accurate theistic information and having a correct epistemological foundation was all that was necessary for Christianity?
 - If the previous question is answered affirmatively, does James essentially advocate the same thing that he expressed in 2:14,17,18,20,24,26?
 - How will the demonstration of the out-working of good behavior in meekness of wisdom demonstrate whether one is “wise and understanding”?
 - the expression of God’s character will demonstrate whether these persons are drawing on God’s wisdom?
 - the “meekness of wisdom” will express the meekness (cf. Matt. 11:29) and wisdom (cf. I Cor. 1:24,30) of Christ?
 - the out-working of godly conduct in practical living will evidence that they are being receptive to God’s activity in faith?
- Vs. 14**
- Can you give some contemporary examples of “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition” among religious people who claim to be “wise and understanding”?
Ex.: denominational partisanship; ecclesiastical politics; statistical analysis; striving for popularity; fanatical zeal; success envy; one-up-man-ship; party-spirit; fleshly personality traits; etc.
 - When James exhorts these persons to “not be arrogant and lie against the truth”, is he meaning...
 - “Don’t brag about your wisdom and understanding, because you could be wrong”?
 - “Don’t boast about your successes, because they may be built on a false foundation”?
 - “Avoid your proud pretensions of an accurate and orthodox belief-system, for in so doing you give a false representation of the truth”?
 - “Attitudes of superiority about wisdom and understanding just reveal that one’s spiritual source is from ‘the father of lies’ (Jn. 8:44), rather than from the Person of Truth (Jn. 8:32; 14:6).”?
 - What should be our reaction/response to those who exhibit jealousy, selfish ambition and arrogance in their claims to be “wise and understanding”? (cf. Phil. 1:15-18)

- Vs. 15** • What does “this wisdom” refer to?
- the wisdom of those who claimed to be “wise and understanding” (13)?
 - the “gentleness of wisdom” advocated in vs. 13?
 - the kind of wisdom that issues forth in jealousy, rivalry, arrogance, falsehood (14)?
- How does “this wisdom that does not come from above” relate/compare with the wisdom that Paul refers to in I Corinthians 1:20 – 2:16?
- What does James mean by referring to “this wisdom not from above” as...
- “earthly”
 - materialistic?
 - temporal?
 - physical?
 - worldly methods?
 - “natural”
 - sensual?
 - fleshly?
 - psychologically based?
 - worldly-minded?
 - “demonic”
 - devilishly deceptive?
 - similar to the way Satan thinks?
 - the teaching of the “doctrines of devils” (cf. I Tim. 4:1)?
 - derived from the spiritual source of Satan?

Vs. 16 • What do the motivations of “jealousy and selfish ambition” lead to?

- Which of the following might qualify as “disorder” in the church?
 - personality conflicts?
 - dissensions about doctrine?
 - political power-plays?
 - contentious board meetings?
 - differing opinions about the pastor?
 - polarizing ideas about spirituality?
- What might “every evil thing” entail?

Vs. 17 • How would you explain “the wisdom from above”?

- wisdom from God?
- wisdom gained from reading the Bible, praying, and studying theology?
- wisdom gained by spiritual maturity?
- wisdom personified in Jesus Christ (cf. I Cor. 1:24,30)
- Which words best describe the words that James uses to describe “wisdom from above”?
 - “pure” – clean, holy, unmixed, uncompromising
 - “peaceable” – conciliatory, unifying, non-combative
 - “gentle” – considerate, respectful, sensitive
 - “reasonable” – flexible, adaptable, deferential, not stubborn
 - “full of mercy” – sympathetic, forgiving, willing to give a second chance
 - “full of good fruits” – character, integrity
 - “unwavering” – stability, permanency, unswayed by self-interest
 - “without hypocrisy” – sincerity, transparency, unfeigned, without pretense

Vs. 18 • Is the “fruit of righteousness” best understood as...

- fruitful character which constitutes righteousness?
- the character of the Righteous One, Jesus Christ?
- How is the “fruit of righteousness sown in peace by those making peace”?
 - absence of conflict and controversy in the church allows for righteous behavior?
 - as Christians allow for the receptivity of the activity of the Prince of Peace (cf Isa. 9:6) in them, they manifest His Righteous character in their behavior?