

This morning we continue ~ with the 2nd half of James Chapt. 3

We'll read v1. again ~ & from vs.13-18.

In writing to these Churches ~
James **is not trying** to write a textbook on theology !

He's writing ~ in response ~ to what he's heard is going on,
in many of these new ~ Christian ~ Churches.

He's concerned ...that he must clarify for them ...

There are **two quite different kinds of wisdom**.

He addresses their problems ... in 'forceful' language,

In order to get *under their skin* ! ...that is...

To stir them up ~ to action ~ & hopefully redirect them.

James never wrote ... to "curry favour" with people !

BUT to encourage right thinking, that would lead to right living

So that these Christians would be ... an effective witness ...

To the power of the Lord, in their own lives.

They needed to demonstrate ...to each other, & to their non –
Christian friends. That, **God can change us** from the inside out

In our passage today ...he reminds them ~

that there's **two kinds of wisdom** ...

The **World's** wisdom ... & **God's** wisdom.

So James' 'overarching' ... **theme** ... is:

Growing in Godly wisdom ...(so we'll grow in spiritual maturity)

We usually make 3 **impressions** on people:

1^{stly} What they **see**. Including ~ that very first impression

2^{ndly} What they hear us **say**, & what they think we mean.

3^{rdly} How they perceive our attitudes...& **actions** ...

How well, we're **living**, what we say we believe !

Our observable ~ character traits, will not go away !

In fact they often reveal themselves ...

Just when we think ~ we have them well hidden !

A Story, to illustrate this is called ... '**Miriam's dilemma**'

Miriam had many **suitors** ! But most of them were '**unsuitable**'

If we sneak a look at Miriam's private diary, it reads like this:

- **Jack.** Jack's been my favourite ... Jack & I get on so well
But, just last week he rang his work, saying he was sick,
when he wasn't...so that he could get away for the
weekend, before the traffic built up !
A bit later he told his mother a lie ~ to keep her happy !
I could never marry Jack. I could never trust what he said.
- **Eric.** Eric has been trying to take me out for months
But he's frightened of his own shadow !
He would be a liability...I'd have to carry him !
I can't marry Eric.
- **Colin.** Now Colin is good looking, & he's got money,
And Education ! and Colin is determined to succeed ...

But ... Colin uses people & then discards them !
 The more he insists ~ that I should marry him ...
 the more sure I am ... that I shouldn't !

The diary continues... but ... what's **important** is ...
 We often ~ don't realise how much of our personality,
 Our character ... is visible to others !

Miriam was wise ... because she gave each man,
 enough time & opportunity, to confirm ~ that what she saw,
 was part of their character ... & not just an isolated incident !

James says ... **Godly Wisdom**, has certain outward evidences.

Our 'Key verse' this morning is v13, which says:

v13. If you are wise and understand God's ways,
 live a life of **steady** goodness,
 so that only good deeds will pour forth.
 And if you don't brag about the good you do,
 then you will be ... truly wise.

So being **wise** ~ is coupled with **understanding** and **humility**.
 God needs men & women ... of courage & humility.

Humility = (a lack of pride) ~ towards personal advantage,
 or self indulgence ... but:

Courage, determination & perseverance, towards ministry.

Wisdom is not a “stand alone” quality !

It requires us to search ...for what will give us ...

A thorough understanding ... of our situation.

Only then...can **wisdom** guide us ...in Making wise choices,

Taking wise actions ... Using wise words.

Words that'll encourage another person in their walk with God.

In our passage, **vs13 & 17 & 18**. Describe ‘**Godly wisdom**’.

While **vs.14 & 15 & 16**. Describe ‘**Worldly wisdom**’.

These two kinds of wisdom stand in sharp contrast !

At first glance they look similar ...

But as we dig deeper...you'll see they're quite different.

In fact, So called ‘Worldly wisdom’ ~ **is not really wise at all**.

In OT ~ in Proverbs ~ we sometimes find **Wisdom**,
is “**personified**” (meaning: Talked about as if it was a person)

For example: (Prov. 3.15f)

Wisdom, she walks in the streets, she does this, she does that,

Some modern thinking...

Regards Satan as not real,

But as just **evil ... personified**.

So how did **Jesus** ~ And our NT writers ~ regard Satan?

...they all taught ...

He's a **real** Spiritual being,

using a multitude of different tactics ...to deceive us.

To persuade men & women that evil is OK,
& that sin ~ has no serious consequences !

Some of you will know the name of ~ **CS Lewis**.
He was already a Professor at Oxford University...
when he became a Christian. He wrote the famous Children's
books: The Chronicles of Narnia ... (see Poster)
The 1st book was ...The Lion ~ the Witch ~ & the Wardrobe

He also wrote: "The Screwtape letters" ...(show)
A **parable** to explain Satan's subtle activity in the world ...
And how he tries to persuade us to think & act in ungodly ways
~ and to follow the 'world's wisdom'.

In recent years ...
We've seen huge changes in society, here in NZ, & worldwide.

Not only ~ with an **increase** in violent crime ~
but in 'white collar crime' too !
The fraudulent 'creaming' of large amounts of money,
That's then stashed away in secret bank accounts.

As selfish ambition & bitter jealousy,
have become commonplace in our society ~

we find an attitude of:

Me first ... & may the devil take the hindermost' !

Whenever there's a protest, on the streets,
 or at a Council meeting ...the Protestors usually say that:
 They're concerned for the good of the community at large,
 And I'm sure **some** are...But many have a secret agenda of
 I want, what I want, & I'm going to shout & yell, till I get it !

In the name of 'Freedom' . . .
 People want the right to **do** ~ & **say** ~ & **teach** ~ anything !
 Yet...the same person demanding freedom...
 Doesn't want other people's freedom ~ getting in **their** way !

You may remember the name of J K Baxter, who wrote poetry
 & thought of himself, as the common people's philosopher !
 In 1969 he **deserted** his wife & children ...
 To start a commune, at a tiny place called Jerusalem,
 on the banks of the Wanganui River.

In derision of society's norms ~ he decided on '**no rules**'
 In less than a week... they had to make some rules,
 Because **everyone** wanted food & drink,
 But, **no one** wanted to get the food ready, or do the dishes !

Our 3 verses that describe **worldly wisdom** vs.14,15,16. Say...

v.14. **But if you are bitterly jealous
 and there is selfish ambition in your hearts,
 don't brag about being wise.
 That is the worst kind of lie.**

v.15. For jealousy & selfishness,
Are not God's kind of wisdom.
Such things are earthly, unspiritual,
and motivated by the Devil.

v.16. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition,
there ~ you will find disorder, and every kind of evil.

James is concerned ... that those who wish to be teachers,
As we saw in (verse 1) ...
recognise the important difference ...
between Godly wisdom ~ and human wisdom.

He describes Godly wisdom, in vs.13, 17, & 18. Like this:

v.13. If you are wise and understand God's ways,
live a life of steady goodness, so that only good
deeds will pour forth. And if you don't brag about
the good you do, then you will be truly wise.

v.17. But the wisdom that comes from heaven,
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 **good deeds**.
It shows **no partiality** and is always **sincere**.

v.18. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds
Of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.

V17 Names **eight characteristics** of Godly Wisdom !

They're (**not**) ... like 8 coloured pencils !

Each colour ~ separate and distinct ...

Think rather ~ of an Octopus ~ with it's 8 long tentacles

Each of the 8 legs is an essential part of the whole animal

The Original readers of James letter,

would've spent a long time discussing verse 17.

because it's jam-packed with important Greek words ...

(words they were familiar with) explaining Godly Wisdom.

1. **The 1st word** ~ is **pure**, it reads:

Wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all 'pure'.

A secular author ~ (back in NT times) ~ had one of his characters say : "*My hands are pure, but my heart is not*"

Even this non-Christian writer, wanted to draw attention to the difference between genuine attitudes & 'play acting' at virtue.

So how shall we **define 'Pure'** ?

The most obvious meaning is **undefiled** or **uncontaminated**.

For example: We say **gold**, is 'pure' ...

when it has no other metals mixed in with it.

'Pure' can be **physical** ~ or **moral** ~ or **spiritual**.

In the Gospels, the Lord used different 'physical examples' ...

To illustrate the importance of purity ~ in the moral & spiritual.

As with all his illustrations ...He describes situations ~
That His listeners were familiar with !

He said:

You are the salt of the earth,
but what good is salt, if it has lost its flavour ?
It will be thrown out as worthless. Mat.5.13

As a young Christian ~

I had great difficulty with the **chemistry**, of this statement.
Salt is very stable. It **doesn't** lose its saltiness by leaking it out.

Then ~ I went to a lecture on Biblical archaeology ~
and discovered that salt for the Middle East region
came from the Dead Sea area ... (& it still does, today)

There are huge salt pans at the southern end of the Dead Sea.
The salt is scraped up, bagged, & sent off to market.

In places ... the cliffs around the edge are Gypsum.
Which is white and chalky ...

So the salt lost its flavour by being **contaminated** with chalk

At a glance it **looked** similar... but it **tasted** quite different

James' use of the word '**Pure**' ~ emphasises the fact that ...
Godly wisdom **must not** be contaminated, with ungodly ideas.

2. **The 2nd word** ~ is **peaceable**. Or **peace loving**.

Let's look at 3 brief contrasts:

1^{stly}) Worldly wisdom is sometimes ~ clever, but, **arrogant**,
Where one person looks with superiority & contempt on others.

2^{ndly}) Then there is a **false wisdom** that is **cruel** ~
and uses clever sounding words ... to put you down.

3^{rdly}) There is "**wicked wisdom**" that seduces people away
from what is right ~ & their loyalty to God.

It's Slogan is ... Peace at any Price

Whereas, **Heavenly wisdom**, starts with our need to be ...
'at peace' with God. So that we can apply this peace ...
to our relationships ...with other men & women.

3. **The 3rd word is** ~ **forbearing**, or '**gentle**' or **considerate**.
It confirms that God's wisdom, is a lot more than just,
Black & white rules. It includes kindness & **compassion**,

I may have the right, in law, to sue you for a fortune !
But I may choose to **forbear**, ie. **Not to exercise my right**
This quality, is the **opposite** ... of revenge !

4. **The 4th word** ~ means, **submissive** ...
as in ... 'willing to work together' & happy to cooperate.

It's a willing attitude, whether the task is in the family ...
or at church, or at work.

There's also ...another slant to this Greek word ...
A willingness to listen, & consider, & even be persuaded.

So, not **stubborn & pig headed** ~ but not **gullible** either !
The opposite ~ of a dismissive ...**Oh no ! That wouldn't work !**

We must take the next two words (**5th & 6th**) together.
'Godly wisdom is full of **mercy & good deeds**'

The word for 'Mercy' in Greek culture, meant ...
Having sympathy for those who were suffering unjustly.
There were plenty of them ~ in the Roman Empire !

But the Christian leaders put an even wider meaning on it
To feel concern and feel sorry ~ even for those who'd
made bad choices, & brought the problems on themselves

Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome says...
**But God showed His great love for us, by sending
Christ to die for us ~ while we were still sinners.**

So Godly wisdom, expresses Godly mercy,
& this results in good fruit. Actions that express ...
Sympathy, Concern, Kindness & Help.

7. **The 7th word** ~ emphasises the virtue of **Impartiality**.

Meaning: not showing favouritism.

& of a decision made for the right reasons,
that will not be changed by a bribe !

This word ~ reflects our Godly convictions.

We know, God's **truth** does not change with the seasons,

And His **principles** don't change, with the circumstances.
So our confidence, is in **the unchanging character** of God

James is a very thoughtful teacher ...he's already said:

Clarify the facts, consider & evaluate them, carefully.

Don't be deceived ~ and don't be gullible !

Now he cautions ...

Don't let your evaluation ... become 'judgemental'

But ...of course ... We mustn't condone evil, either !

Some people say: 'they want to keep an open mind' !

Their intention ... not to be prejudiced ...sounds good.

But sometimes their mind is so **open** ~ that when the good
ideas wander in ... they just wander straight out again !

Both adults & children, need ...

- **Principles** to guide them.
- **Rules** to restrain them.
- **Fences** to protect them.

We put a DANGER sign at the top of a cliff, to **protect** people.
Not to spoil their fun ~ on an afternoon's walk !

GODLY WISDOM includes the concept ...
Of God showing us the dangers to avoid !
Ignoring such dangers ~ isn't getting our freedom back !
It's saying ... 'I know better than God' !

8. **The 8th word** ~ literally means **not hypocritical**.
without pretence, not manipulative !

Being truly wise ~ is contrasted with ~
Playing at wisdom ... to impress others !

Our final verse reads:

**And those who are peacemakers ...
will plant seeds of peace, and reap a harvest of goodness.**

When scripture refers to peacemakers ...
It always envisages **Peace with God** as foundational.

1^{stly} ~ Getting right with God ~ through admitting our faults,
Asking God's forgiveness ... and making a conscious effort,
Not to repeat the same sin again !

2^{ndly} ~ Making peace with our fellow men & women.
Every harvest is dependent on the sower's choice of seeds.

James has presented us with a choice !

There's the **Worldly wisdom** of the secular community ...
Where envy and selfish ambition rule.

Or there's...**Godly wisdom** ...With it's 8 characteristics ...
resulting in the sowing of God's "Peace seeds"...
and...A harvest of Righteousness !

We get the opportunity to choose between them, every day.