

“Wisdom From Above”

August 12, 2012

Text: James 3:17-18

**Wisdom is a condition of the heart to be desired like a
priceless jewel.**

Through the pen of Solomon (who was famous for both his
wisdom/wealth), wisdom was made to speak like a man=>

*“I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek
me will find me. / Riches and honor are with me, Enduring
wealth and righteousness. / My fruit is better than gold,
even pure gold, And my yield than choicest silver. / I walk
in the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of
justice, / To endow those who love me with wealth, That I
may fill their treasuries”* (Prov 8:17-21).

Solomon was writing here about God’s wisdom which He
sends from heaven, making man spiritually
wise/wealthy.

I can only hope that the H.S. will use my words this morning to
create in your hearts a love/longing for the wisdom from
above that is greater than your love for gold/silver/jewelry.

But there is another kind of wisdom (worldly) we learned about
last time, which James said is earthly/natural/demonic.

It too can make people rich, but only in things of this
world.

It is adapted to this world’s sinful ways, & to man’s
depravity, as he is driven by selfish-ambition &
bitter-jealousy.

James warned that it produces disorder & every evil thing.

We studied the folly of worldly wisdom at length last time, so today's study of heavenly wisdom should be a refreshing contrast.

Our text lists five characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom=>

- * Godliness
- * Godly Attitudes
- * Godly Behavior
- * Godly Character
- * Increasing Righteousness.c

*** Godliness**

[James 3:17]=> *“But the wisdom **from above** [from God] is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.**”*

The 1st characteristic of heavenly wisdom which James brings to our attention is its *purity*.

James refers to purity as “*first*” because it is the most important characteristic, in that all the others flow from it.

Heavenly wisdom is first/foremost pure.

That's also why it is followed by the word “*then,*” separating wisdom's purity from all its other characteristics.

“*Pure*” means sinless/innocent—morally free from sin/guilt.

The root from which this word is the same as that for the word *holy*.

So wisdom from God is as pure/free-from-sin as God is Himself.

I.e., it is characterized by godliness.

Heavenly wisdom has to be pure/holy because it's from heaven—It is God's wisdom, given only to men/women who are holy unto God, having become born-again, through faith in Jesus X (His death/resurrection).

As we saw last time, the wisdom that is native to this world is anything but pure/holy.

It's earthly/natural/demonic—the antithesis of heavenly wisdom.

But the godly purity of heavenly wisdom gives it its basic nature, & determines the character of all the other attributes of heavenly wisdom.

The believer himself is positionally pure because he is “in X,” holy & consecrated to Him, sealed/indwelt by the H.S. and now being progressively sanctified by the Spirit.

God gave him the wisdom to become born again in the first place, & He continues to give the believer wisdom as he asks for it (Jms 1:5), and as the H.S. w/i him instructs him in God's truth, and causes him to apply it to his life.

Apart from the saving transformation of his soul thru faith in X, he would never have received God's wisdom.

The wisdom from heaven is essentially a believer's divinely empowered application of God's Word to himself, reshaping his life, conforming it to the image of X.

When we read/believe the Bible, then do what it says, we
become wise, with God's own heavenly wisdom.
Even though we ourselves are not perfectly pure/holy/innocent,
the wisdom God gives us, is—so James calls it “*pure*.”
As a believer grows in wisdom with the guidance of the H.S., that
wisdom has greater/greater impact on his life, and
gradually produces spiritual growth w/i him, unto greater
godliness.
But someday, when Jesus Himself appears, the Xn will be
glorified, & his growth will instantly catapult/climax
in perfect/complete X-likeness, including
perfect/complete wisdom.

Knowing that, we purify ourselves in advance to become more
like Him now.

I Jn 3:2=> “*We know that, **when He appears**, we shall be
like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. /
And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him
purifies himself, just as He is pure” (2-3).*

**It's a wonderful thing to know we will someday be like X, but
that's a difficult concept for us to relate to, right now.**

There is a quantum leap of difference between Him/us just in
terms of holiness/purity alone, which makes it almost
impossible to imagine how we could really ever be fully
“*like Him*,” as John says.

But as we just saw, we will be someday, and Col 3 even adds=>
“*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then **you also***

will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col 3:4).

One way to try to get our minds around this incredible truth is to look at today’s text as a break-down of the various ways in which we will someday be perfectly like Jesus, &, in fact, are becoming more/more like Him, even now—growing daily by little increments, like the imperceptible growth of an oak tree.

* E.g. His attitudes are absolutely godly; ours are becoming more so, as we increase in godly wisdom, through study/application of God’s Word w/ the help of H.S. w/i us, as our resident Mentor/Truth-Teacher.

* X’s behavior is absolutely godly; ours is relatively—so & increasingly so;

When we appear with Him in His glory, everything we do will be perfectly X-like.

* His character is absolutely godly because His is the character of God Himself; ours is becoming more godly & will ultimately be perfect, like His.

* His righteousness is God’s own absolute righteousness, and someday ours will be too.

Meanwhile, it is progressively becoming more so.

As we saturate our hearts w/ God’s Word and surrender ever more to the H.S., He matures us spiritually & grows us up into the attitudes, behaviors, character, & righteousness of godly wisdom.

So the purity of godliness is the most important characteristic of godly wisdom, and it's the basis on which the other characteristics are built as well.

* **Godly Attitudes** (James lists 3)

1) A "Peaceable" Attitude—The believer knew nothing of peace while he was still part of the world, before Jesus saved him. His tongue was a restless evil, full of deadly poison (3:8). God says, *"There is no peace for the wicked"* (Isa 48:22), and he had no peace within or outside himself.

But then the H.S. took him down the Beatitude Trial, beginning w/ a realization of his spiritual poverty;

Then mourning over his sin, being gentled by Spirit's indomitable power, and hungering/thirsting for righteousness, so that he called to X for His imputed righteousness.

The Spirit washed/regenerated him unto salvation, he became pure in heart, a transformation that turned him into a peacemaker at heart—a person who longs for, and works for, peace.

Now he has peace w/ God.

When he pours his heart out to the Lord, he receives incomprehensible peace w/i his heart; and he seeks to be at peace with the people around him.

Before Jesus entered his life, the old selfishly ambitious attitudes made real peace impossible for him.

He was always running into conflict w/ other people.
But now God has given him a love for others, the natural
byproduct of which is peaceful relationships w/ them.
If he lets his flesh get out of control and go unbridled, his old
quarrelsome attitudes reappear, & must be restrained by
confession/repentance.

But as long as he walks in the Spirit, he's now a man of
peace.

Believers can/do resist the Spirit, stifling their own growth
in wisdom.

But when they realize that, repent of it, and yield to
Him, they again experience growth.

The believer's God is a God of peace, his Savior is the Prince of
Peace, & the mind set on the Spirit is life/peace.

Therefore the wisdom of God makes him a man of peace.

2) A "Gentle" Attitude—considerate/forbearing humility that is
respectful, & can patiently endure mistreatment, w/o
becoming hostile/belligerent.

Wisdom teaches a believer to refrain from critical words, or even
from entertaining critical thoughts of others;
To adopt a gentle/harmless attitude toward them.

Gentleness is a characteristic of God.

E.g. in I Kings 19, a hurricane-force wind passed by Elijah,
followed by an earthquake that split rocks, & a fire that
roared around him.

But the Lord wasn't in the wind/earthquake/fire.

Then we read, "*After the fire a sound of a **gentle** blowing,*"
which *was* the voice of God.

Elijah stood in the entrance of the cave where he was
staying, & there he heard the Lord's voice, gently
changing the course of his life & of his ministry.

In the same way there are people who have passed through life's
fiery/shaking/shattering difficulties such as sickness,
accidents, loss of a job, loss-of-family— which would
bring others to their knees before God;

But their knees have remained unbent/unbowed.

And yet, under the gentle convicting power of the Spirit,
they have been moved to repentance/faith.

God has wooed them w/ the warmth of His love.

The gentle voice of the H.S. has touched their hearts,
melted their hardness, & caused them to receive X by
faith.

With an unrepentant Pharaoh, God can be forceful/shrewd, and
confront power w/ power.

But w/ a heart softened by the circumstances of life, He at
times accomplishes His purposes w/ a gentle voice
speaking gentle words.

That is the wisdom of God, which is the same wisdom by which
a believer grows toward Christlikeness, become
gentle-minded himself.

3) A “Reasonable” Attitude—a compliant open-minded attitude that is willing to listen & be persuaded.

That too is characteristic of heavenly wisdom.

At first, it was willing to listen to the logic of soul-saving truth that brought it to repentance/faith in X.

Truth such as that found in Isa 1:18—“‘*Come now, & let us **reason** together, ’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. ’”*

That was the wisdom that originally led the believer to salvation (2 Tim 3:15).

But now, having been gentled by the H.S., & having begun to assimilate the wisdom that comes down from above, the believer’s own heart is reasonable/open to learn whatever else the Spirit wants to teach him.

Again, the believer becomes more/more reasonable like his God, as he assimilates the wisdom of God.

A calm reasonableness is taking control of his mind.

He becomes reasonable, because his God is reasonable, and he’s taking-on God’s attitudes, growing in godly wisdom.

It is amazingly gracious of the Lord to appeal with reasonable argument to sinners who have offended Him so grievously. Man is the offender, and should expect nothing but God’s judgment for his sin.

And yet, instead/incredibly, God—the One offended—
graciously condescends to discuss the matter w/ the
rebel, saying=> “*Come now, and let us **reason***
together.”

Godly wisdom recognizes the extraordinary mercy/graciousness
of such an offer from a God who could have simply
responded with thunderbolts of condemnation/judgment.
It emulates that gracious/gentle/reasonable attitude, as the
Xn grows in godly wisdom.

* **Godly Behavior** (1 attribute, but w/ 2 parts)

“*Merciful Deeds and Good Fruits*”—compassion acted out in
kind deeds of godly behavior.

A wise believer reaches out to help those in need, like the
Good Samaritan, whether/not they deserve his help.
Biblical “mercy” is not just a feeling.

It is acting on such feelings of mercy/sympathy/pity.
James says that godly wisdom is “***full** of mercy & good fruits.*”
Here again we have a picture of the kind of X-like behavior that
will become typical for Xns someday when we have been
glorified;

But meanwhile, it is becoming increasingly typical of us in
this life, as the H.S. instructs us in godly wisdom.
And when you see this merciful spirit develop and produce
acts of mercy in a Xn, you behold something that is
truly beautiful.

Acts of mercy should be part of every believer's life.

I Jn 3:17=> *"Whoever has the world's goods, & beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"* It doesn't!

Real Xn love would actually do something to help.

Every true Xn, into whom the H.S. has poured God's love, will perform kind/loving acts of mercy towards others, from time to time.

But as God's wisdom penetrates deeper/deeper, and takes greater control of the Xn's heart, this characteristic becomes more predominant in his life, making it more like his merciful Savior's life.

The *"mercy and good fruits"* of godly wisdom is a direct contrast with the *"every evil thing,"* produced by worldly-wisdom's selfish ambition.

Godly wisdom pities those who suffer, and pleads w/ sinners to repent/believe.

It longs for them to surrender to God's grace, and X's call for all who are weary & heavy laden, to come to Him for rest.

It feels the heaviness of their burdens, & wants to help them, just as Jesus did.

Its prayers for them are fervent, filled w/ sincere compassion.

Again, what we see here is that, because wisdom comes down from God above, the godly-wise become more God-like, in behavior a/w/a attitude.

Because God's merciful nature is part of the divine wisdom communicated to man, a Xn becomes more merciful as time goes by, & as he grows in heavenly wisdom. God forgive us, if we are resisting His Spirit, holding onto old sinful attitudes/behaviors, that keep that from happening.

God is a God of tender mercies.

We tend to remember His omnipotence & think of Him as a God of crushing power, who would scarcely bother to give a thought to our feeble little sufferings.

But He is also a God of infinite compassion, because He has a great heart, a/w/a a mighty arm.

Not only is He loving—He is love.

You hear that love/compassion/concern in His words=>

"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way & live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!" (Ezek 33:11).

God is so tenderly merciful that He looks w/ anxious care upon the lost, to see how He can turn away His wrath from them, and restore them to His own favor.

His tender-mercy is the most beautiful possible music to a broken heart, and it is like life from the dead, to the discouraged/despondent.

* **Godly Character** (2 attributes of godly wisdom)

1) “Unwavering” Character—not vacillating, but consistent

When godly wisdom fills the mind/heart, a believer
becomes unwavering.

Jms 1:17 says that with God, there is *no variation or
shifting shadow.*”

He is immutable/unchanging.

And the believer, like his god, becomes unwaveringly
peaceable/gentle/reasonable/merciful.

The believer also becomes strong/unwavering in his spiritual
convictions, as he grows in godly wisdom, because God is
strong/unwavering.

* He can stand with Joshua and say=> “*As for me and my
house, we will serve the LORD*” (Josh 24:15).

* He can stand with Shadrach/Meshach/Abed-nego before
a king who threatens to throw them into the fire, and
tell him point blank=> “*We are **not** going to serve
your gods*” (Dan 3:18).

* He can stand with a Stephen before those w/ rocks in
their hands, & shout at them=> “*You men who are
stiff-necked & uncircumcised in heart & ears are
always **resisting the Holy Spirit**; you are doing just
as your fathers did*” (Acts 7:51).

Whatever a believer must face, godly wisdom teaches him
to stand strongly, without wavering.

His godly wisdom makes him as confident of the truth as God

Himself is confident of the truth, & he won’t waver from it.

He knows that God will never break His promises to the believer,
so he will never waver from his promise to his God/Savior.

He may have to take up his cross and follow his Savior to a
site of execution someday, but he won't go back to
worldly wisdom.

Jesus X is the same yesterday/today/forever, & the wise Xn
seeks to be just as unwavering in character, as X is.

2) "Unhypocritical" Character— he is sincere & w/o pretense

Again, he is becoming more/more like his God/Savior—Jesus X.

His love is sincere love, his faith is sincere faith, and there
is no trace of Pharisaical hypocrisy in his life.

He's no actor, hiding his true self behind the various
personal/roles he plays, depending upon whom he is
with.

That too is part of the godly wisdom that is now gradually
shaping his life.

Review

Godly wisdom is characterized by=>

- * Godliness/purity
- * Godly attitudes
- * Godly behavior
- * God character

*** Increasing Righteousness**

**The increasing influence of godly wisdom on a Xn's heart also
sets in motion an increase in his personal righteousness.**

[Verse 18]=> "And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown

in peace by those who make peace.”

The lit. Gk of this verse would read=> “*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*”

* “*Righteousness*” is the spiritual fruit that is sown;

* And righteousness is the harvest that is reaped.

I.e., righteousness keeps producing more of itself, in believers who make peace, because they are filled w/ God’s peace, and God’s Spirit.

It is produced in their own lives, but also in the lives of others who come under their peaceful influence.

The peace of heavenly wisdom is a fertile soil in which righteousness grows best.

It cannot be effectively cultivated in the disorder, selfishness, strife and “*every evil thing*” of worldly wisdom.

But it thrives in the loving peacefulness/harmony of heavenly wisdom.

Heavenly-wise people enjoy the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, w/i themselves (Phil 4:7);

And divine chastening produces w/i them, the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11).

But they also seek the peace of undisturbed spiritual wellbeing in others, by bringing them to X.

They seek to be at peace w/ all men themselves
(Rom 12:18);

And they encourage peaceful relations among other people.
They are peaceful, peace-loving peace-makers and peace-brokers.
**True spiritual peace is a blessing in life that is known only to
God's people.**

Psa 29:11=> *“The LORD will bless His people with **peace**. ”*

The peace that is part of godly wisdom is a believer's, by falling
back on his Heavenly Father, confident that God loves him.
And it is falling back on Jesus X as his Savior, knowing
that He loves believers, & has given His life to save
us.

We have peace w/ God because Jesus' death has removed
the enmity that sin once caused between us/Him.

Now we are reconciled to almighty God.

But then Isa 26:3 adds=> *“The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep
in **perfect peace**, Because he **trusts** in Thee. ”*

Not only does the believer have *peace w/ God* based on his
faith in Jesus' death, he now enjoys the *peace of God*,
as he keeps his mind focused on the God he loves,
communes w/ Him, and cries out to Him in times of
need.

If your mind is fixed on God, He will keep you in perfect peace,
that nothing—not even the fear of death—can ever shake
you.

If you trust God the Father, rest in Christ as your Savior, & yield to the H.S. w/i, you will have the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding.

And the more closely you cling to the Lord, the fuller your sense of that peace will become.

You may claim it as your own inheritance based on Jesus' words=>

*“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; **not** as the **world** gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (Jn 14:27).*

The world can/does give a feeling of peace, but it's false peace.

It's not the genuine peace that Jesus gives to His people.

- * Worldly wisdom gives an outward sense of peace, putting on an air of peace that its people do not feel in their hearts.
- * It may take the form of exaggerating the value of earthly methods for finding peace, to trick oneself into believing they really give true/lasting peace. Such methods as drugs/yoga/psychiatry.
- * It may take the form of sheer bravado—“When I look in the mirror, I feel really good about myself.”
- * It may take the form of raucous party laughter that avoids any serious discussion of God, w/ whom their souls are at war, covering up their real lack of peace.
- * It may take the form of simply pretending to possess inner peace while actually struggling with fears over

something as harmless as a thunderstorm or a dark room at night.

Follow such folks to their death bed, & all pretension of peace will evaporate.

- * The world also gives a sense of peace through spiritual ignorance.
- * It crowds the Bible out of every serious discussion, anesthetizing man against feelings of guilt for sin, which the Bible might stir up.
- * It assures man that he is merely the end-product of a mindless evolutionary process, so when he dies there will be nothing left of him and no one to whom he must give an account for his sin.
- * It seeks to distract people into mindless thoughtlessness about eternal matters (e.g. their souls) thru a giddy whirl of pleasures/proccupations.
- * The world also gives carnal security thru its supposed wisdom. They say, “Xns think we have lost our way, spiritually, but we’re doing alright, & life goes on in spite of the sin they say we have committed.

These are the spiritual descendants of the people of the

Flood=> *“eating and drinking, they were marrying & giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark”* (Mt 24:38).

Worldly-wisdom hides from people the fact that there can be no peace at all, until man finds peace with his Creator.

Wishing God away, or rationalizing Him away as if He were some hypothetical religious construct whose existence is dubious at best, will not give man peace.

Every man knows intuitively that he was created by a Creator, and that he must someday face that Creator. He knows that ultimately, Someone is waiting out there, who will pass judgment on his life, when he dies.

If a person dares not think about his eternal state, you can be sure there is something wrong, he knows it, and he's avoiding it.

That's why the Lord says through Isaiah=> *“There is no peace for the wicked”* (Isa 48:22).

There is no peace for them, & there never can be, until they take advantage of God's one provision for dealing w/ the condemnation that hangs over their heads because of sin—savingly repentant faith in the blood of Jesus & the grace of God.

On the other hand, godly wisdom saves man's soul through faith in Jesus X, & then it gives him peace w/ God/men.

And in that peace, a Xn's righteousness reseeds itself to produce ever greater righteousness, giving him the confidence that God is indeed at work in his heart, perfecting him and preparing him to be revealed w/ X in glory, perfect/sinless/wise and w/o spot/wrinkle.

That is the peaceful wisdom that comes down from above.

If any man/woman here lacks that-peace/that-wisdom, Jesus stands before you, calling, “*Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, & I will give you rest*” (Mt 11:28).

If you have been resisting the H.S., or rationalizing away your sin, confess it to X, even now.

“Wisdom From Above”

August 12, 2012

Text: James 3:17-18

Our text lists five characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom...

Prov 8:17-21

*** Godliness**

[James 3:17]

1. James refers to purity as “*first*” because it is the most important characteristic in that all the others [10 flow] from it.
Jms 1:5
2. The wisdom from heaven is essentially a believer’s divinely empowered application of God’s Word to himself, reshaping his life [24 conforming] it to the image of Christ.
I Jn 3:2-3; Col 3:3-4
3. One way to look at today’s text is as a break-down of the various ways in which we will someday be perfectly like Jesus, and are becoming more like Him even [8 now].

*** Godly Attitudes**

A “Peaceable” Attitude

Jms 3:8; Isa 48:22

4. The believer has peace with God; and he seeks to be at peace with the [14 people] around him.

A “Gentle” Attitude

I Kn 19:11-13

5. With a heart softened by the circumstances of life, God at times accomplishes His purposes with gentle words; that is the same wisdom by which a believer [12 grows] toward Christlikeness.

A “Reasonable” Attitude

Isa 1:18; II Tim 3:15

6. Godly wisdom recognizes the extraordinary mercy and graciousness of God; it emulates that gracious, gentle, [24 reasonable] attitude.

*** Godly Behavior**

“Merciful Deeds and Good Fruits”

I Jn 3:17

7. Because God's merciful nature is part of the divine wisdom communicated to man, a Christian becomes more merciful as time goes by, and he grows in [18 heavenly] wisdom.

Ezek 33:11

*** Godly Character**

"Unwavering" Character

Josh 24:15; Dan 3:18; Acts 7:51

8. A Christian's godly wisdom makes him as confident of the truth as God Himself is confident of the truth, and he won't [12 waver] from it.

"Unhypocritical" Character

9. Again, he is becoming more/more like his God and Savior—Jesus Christ; his love is sincere love, his faith is [16 sincere] faith.

*** Increasing Righteousness**

[Verse 18]

10. The peace of heavenly wisdom is a fertile soil in which righteousness [12 grows] best.

Phil 4:7; Heb 12:11; Rom 12:18; Psa 29:11

11. The peace that is part of godly wisdom is a believer's by falling back on his Heavenly Father [20 confident] that God loves him.

Isa 26:3; Jn 14:27

12. The world gives an outward sense of peace, putting on an air of peace that its people do [8 not] feel in their hearts.

Mt 24:38

13. Worldly-wisdom hides from people the fact that there can be no peace at all, until man finds peace with his [16 Creator].

Isa 48:22

14. There is no peace for them until they take advantage of God's one provision for dealing with the condemnation that hangs over their heads because of sin—savingly repentant faith in the [12 blood] of Jesus.