

A FAITH THAT WORKS

(A Study of the Book of James)

Wisdom from Above

TEXT: James 3:13-18

INTRODUCTION: Have I told you that I love the Christmas season? I delight in the celebration of the coming of Messiah into His world to seek and to save all of us who were lost. I love to contemplate the words sent by God to the prophets to foretell the entrance of the Christ into the physical universe He spoke into being.

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Many of the prophecies of Christ's coming are like this one in Isaiah, a mixture of things that Christ would be and do during His first coming, and things He will be and do in His second coming.

In Jesus' second coming,

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And **the government will be upon His shoulder.**

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

But in Jesus' first coming,

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called **Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Christ brought more to us in His first coming, in His first advent, than we can even think or imagine. But as Isaiah said, one of the things that He was and is still today is the Wonderful Counselor.

What is a counselor? The Scripture indicates that a good counselor is one who has wisdom and understanding.

- **Wisdom is good judgment based on the understanding of God's principles.**
- **Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view.**
- **Wisdom is seeing the relationship between our problems and God's principles.**

Folks, Jesus brought to us the capacity to have this kind of wisdom and understanding.

Now, we are reading in the Book of James the words given by the Holy Spirit to the half-brother of Jesus, a man who lived for a while in the same house as the Wonderful Counselor, a man who personally knew Wisdom incarnate.

And he asks us this question:

James 3:13–18 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.

I. EACH OF US CAN HAVE THE WISDOM THAT COMES FROM CHRIST.

- A. If you remember, James already told us this truth. He already said that wisdom is available to anyone who has trusted Christ.

If you have not yet trusted in Jesus as your own Savior and Lord, my friend, trust Him today. He offers you

- Pardon from sin
- The gift of eternal life
- Wisdom for living your life successfully in this world today

It is not just available to a few. It is available to all, but only after you trust in Him.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

- B. Wisdom is not only something each believer can have; the wisdom that comes from Christ is something each believer ought to have.
1. When James asks, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” the answer should not be, “No one!”
 2. Humility may properly prevent you from waving your hand or standing up and shouting, “I am!” but there ought to be many, many in this congregation who can say in honesty and with integrity, “I thank God that by His grace He has given me wisdom and understanding. I am not yet as wise as I hope to be, and I do not understand all that I hope one day to understand, but God has given me a portion of the wisdom and understanding of my Lord Jesus Christ.”
 3. Now, I would not ask you to raise your hand if that is your testimony; but I want to affirm that is the testimony of a number of you who are here this morning. And if that is your testimony, I say to you, right now in your heart, in your mind, bless God! Thank God! He has given you wisdom and understanding such as Christ brought into this world when He came, wisdom that astounded the rabbis and caused His enemies to be confounded.
- C. But my friend, if it was not humility but honesty that would prevent you from saying, “I have wisdom and understanding that come from Christ.”

If you are honest enough with yourself to say

- **I sometimes lack good judgment because I don't know God's principles.**
- **I have trouble seeing life from God's point of view.**
- **Many times I do not see the relationship between my problems and God's principles.**

Let me say to you, you can!

First, be saved. Trust Christ. That is the beginning.

But that is not all. Every believer has the capacity to receive the wisdom of God, but not every believer has received it.

How do you receive it?

Proverbs 2:1-4 1 My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, 2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, *And* apply your heart to understanding; 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, *And* lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as *for* hidden treasures;

If you receive My words and treasure My commandments.

If you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding.

If you seek it and search for it.

To summarize: If you

1. **Read, believe, and cherish the Word of God.**
2. **Ask the Lord for good judgment based on His principles.**
3. **Seek His truth in His Word.**

This is why I, and others, plead with you to faithfully read the Bible.

This is why I practically beg you to participate in a Lifechange Group.

This is why I encourage your faithful attendance on Sunday as the Word of God is preached and taught.

Receiving the wisdom of Christ that He has for you is available to every believer, but it is no casual affair. Jesus is not Santa Clause that promises you get your wish because you sat on his lap for 60 seconds and said you wanted wisdom for Christmas.

You can have it! Any and every one of us can have it!

- But first you have to trust Him and surrender your life to Him.
- Then you have to seek it through the reading and study of the Word of God.

D. What is the promised result?

Proverbs 2:5-8 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding; 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints.

Then... you will understand.

For... the Lord gives wisdom.

So, after James asks, who among you has wisdom and understanding, he then points out a sad truth:

II. NOT EVERYONE WHO THINKS HIMSELF WISE HAS THE WISDOM OF CHRIST.

James 3:13–16 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.

A. Wisdom and understanding are demonstrated by good conduct and works done in meekness.

- **Meekness is self-control.**
- **Meekness is using one's power for God rather than for self.**

B. Clear indicators that you do not have the wisdom of Christ:

1. **Bitterness – a severe, abiding, unresolved hurt** (This comes by being hurt in the past and never forgiving the one who hurt or offended you.)
2. **Envy – resentment of an advantage enjoyed by another person** (Why am I not rich like them? Why am I not in that position instead of them? Why don't people respect or honor me like they do them?)
3. **Self-seeking** (Working to get one's own way)

James 3:15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. James says that this kind of perverted wisdom causes confusion and other evils.

III. THE WISDOM OF CHRIST PRODUCES A CHRIST-LIKE LIFE.

James 3:17–18 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.

Consider these characteristics in the life of Jesus.

- **Pure** – in word, deed, thought, motive
- **Peaceable** – does not mean he was a man-pleaser. Jesus was a God-pleaser, and He was peaceable with all who also were wanting to please God.
- **Gentle** – Such power, but such control. With a mere word, the storm ceased. At a phrase, demons fled. With no gun and only a sentence, Jesus dispelled a mob ready to stone an adulteress.

- **Willing to yield** – Never insistent on His own way, yet always insistent on God’s way
- **Full of mercy** – While hanging on a cross in agony impossible to describe, He pled with His Father, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
- **Without partiality** – rich and poor, sick and well, noble and slave – Jesus loved them all
- **Without hypocrisy** – the same godly character morning and night, no matter who He was with

That was Jesus!

And the more we receive of the wisdom and understanding of this Christ, whose birth we celebrate during this season, the more our lives will look like His.