

James

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] If the Lord will help me, I will speak from the Epistle of James, the third chapter, 17th verse.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

The Epistle of James, the third chapter, the 17th verse. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

It is written that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, instruction, reproof, correction, that the man of God may be perfect, truly furnished and all good works.

If a man of God is to be perfect, all these various scriptures with their various characters must have their due place.

[1 : 49] In the esteem we feel for them, and in the prophet we seek to derive from them. And it is very noticeable that different parts of the scripture have their distinctive features and characters.

And so do the epistles. You compare the epistles of Paul with James or John.

You will notice that each one has its distinctive character, the line of truth, into which the writers were directed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and or to a profitable end and purpose.

We know that each one has its own. We know that, for instance, Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, as Peter says, dealt very much in the deep, mysterious doctrines of the Gospel.

We know that John dealt very much in the Gospel. We know that John dealt very much in the Gospel. We know that James deals very much in the practical side of godliness and requires it of those who profess that godliness.

[3 : 13] Well, now, all these various aspects of truth are profitable for us. And it is not profitable to limit our regard for the scriptures to any one part of the scriptures.

Some perhaps may almost limit the sounds. Well, the sounds are wonderful. Some may, of course, find the teaching of the apostle to be very nourishing for their faith and instructive.

That is profitable. But don't neglect James. Because if we neglect James, it may be unprofitable with regard to the practical fruits of our profession of the Gospel.

Paul says, By grace are ye saved through faith. James says, Faith without works is dead. And therefore, equally certain truths.

And so on, directing your mind this evening, not so much to any depth of doctrine, nor of experience, but to this plain direction or commendation by James of wisdom.

[4 : 38] The wisdom which is from above. And in this, the apostle James, there is very much a problem at the same points with regard to wisdom as the Proverbs.

The wisdom which abounds, which abounds, abounds with commendations of wisdom, directions to seek it. And the happiness of a man who finds it.

Happy is the man that finds it wisdom. And the man that get it understanding. So that man is a happy man that finds this wisdom.

And that gets this spiritual understanding. It's a very great blessing to him. And not only a blessing to him, but it may very well make him to be a blessing to others as well.

And so now, coming at once to the text, in the first place, I will spend a few moments considering the subject of wisdom in a general way.

[5 : 55] And then in the second part of the discourse, to dwell upon these distinctive features of that soul, desirable, profitable, and necessary wisdom.

And first then, the subject itself. Now, we read in the Proverbs that wisdom is the principal thing.

Therefore, get wisdom. And we all by getting, get understanding. How are we to understand this?

That wisdom is the principal thing. Because, it might be said, surely, there are other features of grace, as needful as wisdom, if not equal with it, if not exceeding it in importance.

How is wisdom the principal thing? We might say, surely, faith is the principal thing. For it's by faith we are saved.

[7 : 15] Or we might remember, the apostle John's commendation of love. John says, now abide in these three. Faith, hope, love.

But the greatest of these is love. Well, according to John, then, love is the principal thing. According to Paul, faith is the principal thing.

Well, now, how are we to understand these matters? That they don't contradict. Because no scripture can contradict itself. There must be somewhere a blending of these various scriptures that put the importance, some to this and some to that, as being the principal things.

Well, I understand it this way. Well, I understand it this way. These different virtues, I will say, want another word.

These different virtues that are commended to us in the scripture are principal things in their own principal spheres. For instance, as I said just now, faith is the principal thing in the sphere of salvation.

[8 : 41] There's no salvation that's not believing. Love is the principal thing in the sphere of obedience.

If you love me, keep my commandments. And as one good man said, that is no love that does not bring forth obedience.

And that is no obedience that is not brought forth by love. Where is the matter of salvation? Faith is the principal thing.

Where is the matter of obedience? Love is the principal thing. Well, now, what then is the sphere in which wisdom is the principal thing?

Now, I think we get a guide to that in that proverb that we read. He that handeth a matter wisely shall find good.

[9 : 45] What comes in another proverb? And whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. True. Now, in the matter of handling things, as I want to come to, wisdom is the principal thing.

He that handeth a matter wisely. Now, he may have faith to believe to the saving of his soul. He may have love to prompt him in obedience to the will and word of Jesus Christ.

That he must have wisdom to handle the matter. He may have faith, yet make a stamp bungle of handling the matter. That may appear perhaps as a more clear in this.

He that handeth a matter wisely shall find good. Because we don't go very long without having some matter or other to handle.

And I've not the slightest idea what matter may be exercising any of your mind as to how you are to handle that matter.

[11 : 02] Whether you may have some problem. Whether you may have some problem. Whether you may have some problem. Whether you may have some wisdom to solve it. Or some step. Whether you may have wisdom to know whether you should take it or not.

Or if it should be. And why should it not be that any of you may have upon your minds and your hearts the question of the profession of your faith.

And of the Lord's appointed ordinances. Now if you have matters like this on your mind, you've got something to handle. And especially those of us who are in positions of responsibility in the church of God.

And upon whom it devolves not to dictate but to counsel. Oh how we do need wisdom to handle our church matters.

And the same applies of course to other matters as well. Family matters. Home matters. Paul says he that handles it a matter.

[12 : 19] If it says distinctly what matter, you'll say well that's not mine. But it says the matter. That is any matter that is exercising the mind and with regard to which one must for a force come to some decision and take some step.

Now that's your matter. Now that's your matter. And very much will depend on how you handle it.

And how you handle it will depend upon whether your heart and mind is influenced and directed by this wisdom.

But now I've mentioned that text. I must not carry it through. He that handeth a matter wisely shall find good.

And there are. And he that trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. See the connection. He that handeth a matter wisely shall find good.

[13 : 31] But he must not trust in his handling that matter. That he will find good in it. He must trust in the Lord for the good. He must not say now I've handled this matter wisely.

Good will come out of this. No. He must say good will come out of this. In the Lord's way. I must trust the Lord as to how he will bring good out of this.

So we need to handle the matter wisely but not trust in our wise handling. But to trust in the Lord.

So this matter, our wisdom really is a very deep and necessary consideration for us.

Because if we handle a matter unwisely, we shall not find good. Indeed, we may find to ourselves or we may cause to others a good deal that is not good.

[14 : 38] But depends on wisdom. Now I think you will see what I mean by wisdom being the principal thing in this particular sphere.

But wisdom is a very important virtue in other spheres as well as our handling of matters.

The one thing. Here we do need wisdom with regard to the scriptures. The scriptures. Now the scriptures in one way with regard to essential matters are very plain.

I admire two things in the scripture with regard to the truth. Simplicity and mystery. That which is clear and that which is very profound.

It is not given to us, I don't feel, to understand everything in the scriptures. Because I think that there is much in the scriptures that will never be understood.

- [15 : 44] Especially with regard to prophetic matters until those things are brought to pass. But even with regard to those things of truth in the scriptures that we need to understand in order to believe.

Understand is there what they readest? That's the question. Understand is there what they readest? Where there is no understanding, there is nothing for faith to they hold on to believe and to cleave to.

But oh hey we need wisdom to understand the scriptures. And no natural wisdom, no natural intelligence will be sufficient to this.

We need the wisdom which is from above to understand the scriptures which are from above. That is, from above by divine inspiration.

If anyone thinks they can understand the scriptures without spiritual wisdom, they are sure to go wrong somewhere around them.

- [16 : 55] If they try to understand the scriptures by their own wisdom. Or as the apostle Paul said, he takeeth the wise in their own craftiness.

It's a great thing to understand the scriptures. For they are wonderful. As the Selmist said, open there mine eyes.

And you know the eyes, the understanding is the eye of the mind. Just as the natural eye is the eye of the body, and we can discern and see things that are visible.

So the understanding is the eye of the mind. Or I might say, the eye of the soul. We see what we understand. The psalmist said, open there mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

The law there of course, as we know, means the world. The natural mind may perhaps fairly well deserve the teaching of the scriptures and the doctrines of the gospel.

- [18 : 18] But the question is, are they seen to be wonderful?

Are they seen to be wonderful? Now we need that the Lord to open our eyes, that we may see those things in the scriptures to be wonderful.

What a wonderful person Jesus Christ is. People may say, we can see Jesus Christ in the scriptures clearly enough. But do they see what a wonderful person he is?

You may read of his love. But do they deserve what a wonderful love his is? And so on. Now we need wisdom to understand the scriptures.

Otherwise, we are like a person turning a blind eye to a lovely scenery or objective and see nothing in it.

- [19 : 31] Wisdom is needed with regard to the scriptures. And then again, wisdom in this sense is the principle thing with regard to knowing God's will.

Here is a word for it. Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Very important point this is. To know what the will of the Lord is. Because, if we are rightly exercised, this will be sometimes especially, a very weighty consideration with regard to the matters we have to handle.

What is the will of the Lord in this matter? Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. But even apart from the question of the will of the Lord, in some particular matter, the will of the Lord should be the rule of our life and conduct and practice and obedience.

Wisdom is the principle thing to discern what the will of the Lord is. And so I might mention other matters, but because the time is passing, I would leave the general consideration of the importance of wisdom.

[21 : 06] Now let us consider the features of this so necessary wisdom as James sets them before us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And the first thing to notice is that James makes a solemn distinction between wisdom and wisdom.

There is the wisdom, he said, which is from beneath. There is the wisdom which is from above. The wisdom which is from beneath.

That may be understood comparatively that it is not from above. Or that may be considered as having a more sinister bearing.

That is, it is the wisdom of Satan that is from beneath. And this wisdom, James, who doesn't mince his words, says, it is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

[22 : 17] That is, it is earthly, and intimately incapable of discerning anything of a spiritual and heavenly nature.

It is sensual, it is devilish. I won't dwell on those particulars. And James shows what the effect of that wisdom is, if men are influenced by it, and guided by it, in their spirit.

It causes envy, and strife, and confusion, and every evil world. All this can be ascribed to earthly and devilish wisdom.

Oh, how different is the wisdom that is from above. For if the wisdom is from above, where does it come from? It can only come from the only and all-wise God.

For God is wise, infinitely wise. And with him is wisdom of the most pure and the most holy nature.

[23 : 33] He is the only wise God. And the wisdom which is from above comes down from the infinite divine source of holy wisdom.

Oh, this would be a blessing. If we more do receive from that fountain of wisdom, wisdom to direct our way, to handle our matters, to know the will of God and doing.

Happy, happy is the man who has found that wisdom that is from above. And who is made wise by it in his own heart.

The wisdom that is from above. If it is from above, how then must we receive it? Well, it is God's gift.

That is an equal word in this connection. If any of you lack wisdom, and I know I do. But if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.

[24 : 45] Who give it liberally to all men, and upbraid it not. That is, the Lord never upbraids a man for his folly if he comes to God through wisdom.

Never. And he give it his wisdom. He give it chiefly through the Holy Spirit's teaching and guiding power and enlightenment in the understanding.

Remember that everything that is spiritual comes by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. And by the word of truth, thy word is light, a light to my power and a lamp to my feet.

By the word of truth, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, this wisdom descends from above into our needful hearts.

Make us truly wise in that wisdom. Now, let us consider the features of this wisdom that is from above, and which mark it as being so distinct and separate in nature and effect from the wisdom that is earthly and devilish.

[26 : 08] And first, pure. Now, in enumerating a number of features of this wisdom, as James is doing, he must put one first.

But that is not the point. This wisdom is first pure, because, if it is not first pure, though it may seem to be peaceable and the like, it is not this heavenly wisdom.

It must be pure first. It must be pure first. That is, on the one hand, bearing in mind that this wisdom is of a spiritual nature, there is nothing in it of that impurity of craft and guile and clever deceit that doth so often mark earthly wisdom.

We know how things are in the world. Well, and that don't. And what clever deceit goes on in the world. And how, if some men especially, are very wise, you must be very careful.

Very careful. Because their wisdom may very well not be pure. They may very easily deceive you, because they can do it so craftily.

[27 : 39] They have wisdom to be crafty, to cover and disguise their real motive by some hypocritical pretence of what is right.

Oh, how many have been deceived by clever people. Because they are so wise. This is the way the thing goes. They have their motive, their end, their advantage.

They are able to gain it. And they are wise enough to see how they can attain that advantage, even if they deceive other people in the pursuit of it.

Oh, but this heavenly wisdom has nothing of this impurity in it. Hell can it. Heaven that wisdom that comes down from so pure a being, so holy a being, as God is, at any of this mud of earth, and this evil of sin, it is first pure.

Pure. Pure. And not only negatively pure in the sense there's no guile or craft in it, but it's positively pure because it has such a purifying effect and influence on the heart and mind.

[29 : 03] For our mind and our spirit is very much influenced by these matters by our wisdom. If they are influenced by pure wisdom that will purify our motive and our spirit and our real sincerity of heart, it will impart its own purity to our mind and to our spirit.

I know that with regard to the cleansing of our hearts from sin. The blood of Christ is essential. Oh yes.

And I know that with regard to a new nature, a spiritual nature in us, the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost is essential.

Oh yes. And it can be the pureness. But given those two essentials, then very much depends on our mind and our spirit and our motive being purified by this pure wisdom.

and my friends we need this very much because our old nature is still our old nature and has got all the roots that it originally had still inherent in it so that we've got two natures if we are children of God and the one contradictory to the other they are nothing and preserve us from being ensnared by that wisdom which is inherent in our fallen nature of the wisdom that comes from above it will purify us in that way the wisdom which is from above is purged purely if it isn't pure whatever pretence it has of being peaceable and gentle and so on is just a part of its crafty nature it pretends to be that to deceive people but the wisdom that is first pure then will have these other features inherent in it as well let us briefly consider them first pure then peaceable well the wisdom which is from above must be peaceable because it comes from the very

[31 : 42] God of peace himself oh what a blessing is peace in every aspect of it peace with God in the soul is a blessing peace with one another is a blessing peace in the church God is a blessing and how can this blessing of peace be enjoyed unless this peace peaceable wisdom prevails in our spirit let me mention one or two things in regard of this now I bring before you again that proverb he that handleth a matter wisely shall find good it all depends on what spirit of the matter is handled with now if it's handled with this wisdom it will be handled peaceably but if it's not handled with this wisdom it will be handled provocatively it is very surprising that the same thing can be handled with such different effects and

James brings into this consideration very much the use of speech now for some people to speak is to infuse a peaceable spirit you hear them speak they speak in such a way as while they stand for what is right they have distance to stand for it without being provocative and stirring up strife and contention but there are allowances and in speaking for this congregation I have this bounty of not knowing anyone's disposition particularly so that no one can think well he's got me in his mind because I haven't anyone in my mind but I know that there are some people who through unwisdom for them to speak means trouble they're sure to say something or show a certain spirit that will stir up trouble for some people to speak is to allow it we have a good and costly man in our church as a deacon and who had been a superintendent of the police he was a man who held a considerable position and was accustomed to exercising control and discipline in his profession and when he retired he kept him to crow to spend the rest of his days because he was born there and he became a member of our church and it often used to strike me how that he seemed to know what to say when to say and how to say and if he stood up to speak there was a quiet hush always he seemed to have that influence that he didn't realise he had himself he was so peaceable he never caused any trouble in the church never now the wisdom which is strong of God is peace the Lord and we're exhorted to follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord or what a blessing is peaceable wisdom and there can be no peace without it present without this peaceable wisdom to know how to handle a matter peaceably is a wonderful thing and we're sure to find good in handling a matter peaceably so that we trust in the

Lord with regard to the issue of it oh what sorrow what wounding has often been caused by an unpeaceable way of speaking and handling matters you know the wisdom which is from above is peaceable wisdom and we may command wise in the sense of being able to speak and to act and to handle matters in a peaceable way it must be forced and I cannot dwell long on any one point peaceable gentle gentleness is not necessarily weakness of course but the same principle of kind something just shot into my mind love and that is that in the Lord

Jesus Christ and in his handling of matters and in his peaceable and in his gentleness we have an absolutely perfect example of this text and if you were to read the eighth chapter of the Proverbs you will see there that the Lord Jesus Christ is personified by this wisdom so that's it and death has come into my mind that will give me a line to go by there the spirit of Jesus Christ was very peaceful and very pure he was undefiled in mind and speed and he was he was peaceful it was said of him prophetically he shall not strive nor lift up neither shall his voice be heard in the streets that doesn't mean of course by the way that the

Lord Jesus Christ never spoke out of doors the idea expressed in it was that he was never turbulent never stirred up strife in the nation like some were doing at that particular time that is he never stirred up strife in rebellion against the government or never stirred up strife between one man and another his spirit was so peaceful how gentle Jesus was listen to this I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ his spirit was so wise and he was so gentle how suitable to Jesus Christ was the designation the Lamb of God I know that of course mostly that applies to his sacrificial character but it applies to his personal disposition how gentle is a lamb nothing ferocious about that animal have you ever noticed you probably have in the book of the

[39 : 02] Revelation where the apostle John was directed thus come and I will show thee the lion of the tribe of Judah and I looked and behold a lamb stood on their side the angel said I will show thee the lion of the tribe of Judah John said I looked and I saw not a lion but a lamb you know I suppose that in actually speaking two animals could not be more opposite than a lion and a lamb and how could they both in some sense have a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ well put the two together my friends a lamb is fearless but is ferocious a lion is fearless but is ferocious a lamb is gentle but is gentle now the

Lord Jesus Christ had the strength and fearlessness of a lion without its generosity and he had the gentleness of a lamb without its timidity he was so gentle the bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench he was so gentle oh what a gentle word he had for broken hearts what a gentle touch he had for poor wounded consciences never did the surgeon handle patients painful wounds with such a gentle handling that the Lord Jesus Christ handled the wounds of the consciences and hearts of those who came to it now the wisdom which is from a dove is gentle wisdom and easy to be entreated it is not stiff and hard and unyielding but I need to be a little careful in what I'm commending to you easy to be entreated doesn't mean that such as have this wisdom have got no principles and are not prepared to stand by them it cannot possibly mean that such are easy to be entreated without anything they feel is not right but my friend let me put it to you like this there's all difference between steadlessness and stubbornness there's steadlessness is a matter of principle stubbornness is a matter of disposition steadlessness is to stand for what is right in a gentle and a peaceable way stubbornness is to be unyielding anyway take up a certain attitude and never bend never yield no matter whether it's right or wrong that stubbornness nothing easy to be entreated about but especially this wisdom which is from above will make a man easy to be entreated even when it may perhaps cost him something if the thing is right or perhaps it is something that naturally he might resent but it will make him easy to be entreated with regard to it there is a case exactly to the point you know the history of Philemon and

Onesimus Onesimus let him his master by demon and apparently robbed him and fled to Rome because he no dare thought that in that popular city amongst crowds of different nations that congregated in Rome he would be quite lost sight of it no one could possibly trace him and probably no one would have traced him if he hadn't been his chosen vessel of mercy and the eye of God was upon him and brought him under the ministry of the apostle Paul in Rome which was a means of his regeneration and his conversion so that he became a son in the faith of Paul but it put Paul in a very difficult position because if he sent Onesimus back to

Philemon he might well send him back to very severe punishment which Paul was loath to do if he kept him in Rome there would be an injustice to Philemon so what did he do here's a man who has wisdom he sent him back to Philemon with a most gentle tender loving letter and he said this I deceive thee for my son Onesimus whom I have begotten in my bonds that is I received him to take him back to forgive him and receive him not as a servant but as a son now we haven't any very clear record of reaction in Philemon to that letter but I'm certain if that good man Philemon had the wisdom which is from the love he would be easy to be intrigued to take by

Onesimus back forgive him and love him he wouldn't retain resentment against him because the wisdom which is from the love is easy to be intrigued full of mercy that is full of mercy to forgive and have compassion mercy doesn't always mean to forgive a wrong in fact the word itself means compassion to such as are in distress but still it often does imply the extending of a forgiving spirit full of mercy for what does the Lord thy God require of me but to do justly and to love mercy suppose anyone has offended you you say well the word of

[46 : 19] God binds me to forgive the offense that will do you love to forgive it oh you say I don't feel I can't come up to that then you need more wisdom you need more wisdom what does the Lord thy God require of thee not merely to be merciful but to love mercy oh you say that means to love God's mercy well it certainly does but he who loves God's mercy rightly will love mercy itself full of mercy not like the wicked servant that when he's being forgiven a debt he could never pay and his Lord knew he never could took his fellow servant by the throat pay me that thou whist there was no mercy in it the wisdom which is from a thought won't make a man act like that take a fellow servant by the throat and say pay me that thou whist it rather for you well what is this to what

I owe my Lord and he's forgiven me all and the cost of the blood of his dear son the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy all equally important features of this wisdom but just one moment without partiality the wisdom which is from above is without partiality in its affection to the Lord's people grace be with all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth we are sadly actually partial even regard to our spiritual affections it would be just our little set and outside of that love but that's partiality because those who are outside of our little set may be as dear to

Jesus Christ as we are and his love is without partiality no I'm not commending mine a lack of judgment and discernment I'm therefore to set truth of this scriptures plainly and as simply as I can and James himself comes down very heavily on a certain kind of partiality and that is partiality for the rich that if there come into your assembly a poor man in vile raven you're almost ashamed to see him in your assembly you say sit there here under my footstool if you must come but if there come in a man clothing in goodly raven and so on oh how pleased you are to see him have you given the chief face and chief honour says James that's partiality that's partiality you know the wisdom which is from above is without partiality and without hypocrisy now

I must tell you that's now I hope there hasn't been any note or sense of harshness in what I said tonight I haven't meant it that way and in this assembly I can honestly say there's no one who feels to need this heavenly wisdom more than I need and to manifest in my ministry my handling of matters church matters and other matters and in my walk and conduct before God before his people and before the world perhaps I pray those two lines as much as any in day to day give wisdom to direct my way and strength to do my and do to to help your