

JAMES 3

A STUDY THROUGH THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Wisdom from Above

James 3:17-18



Two Faces of Wisdom

“THOSE WHO WOULD GIVE UP
ESSENTIAL LIBERTY,
TO PURCHASE A LITTLE
TEMPORARY SAFETY,
DESERVE NEITHER
LIBERTY NOR SAFETY.”

- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



James 3:17

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

1. This Wisdom is “Pure”

- James finds inspiration for this in the OT:
 - Psalm 19:8 – “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”
- And he also finds inspiration in the NT, specifically in the teaching of Jesus:
 - Matthew 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“Pure” Wisdom

- Literally, “chaste,” “sanctified.”
- This is in direct contrast to the worldly wisdom presented last week – all that is “earthly, natural, demonic.”

Why is “pure” the first characteristic of Godly wisdom listed?

Why Not Begin With #2?

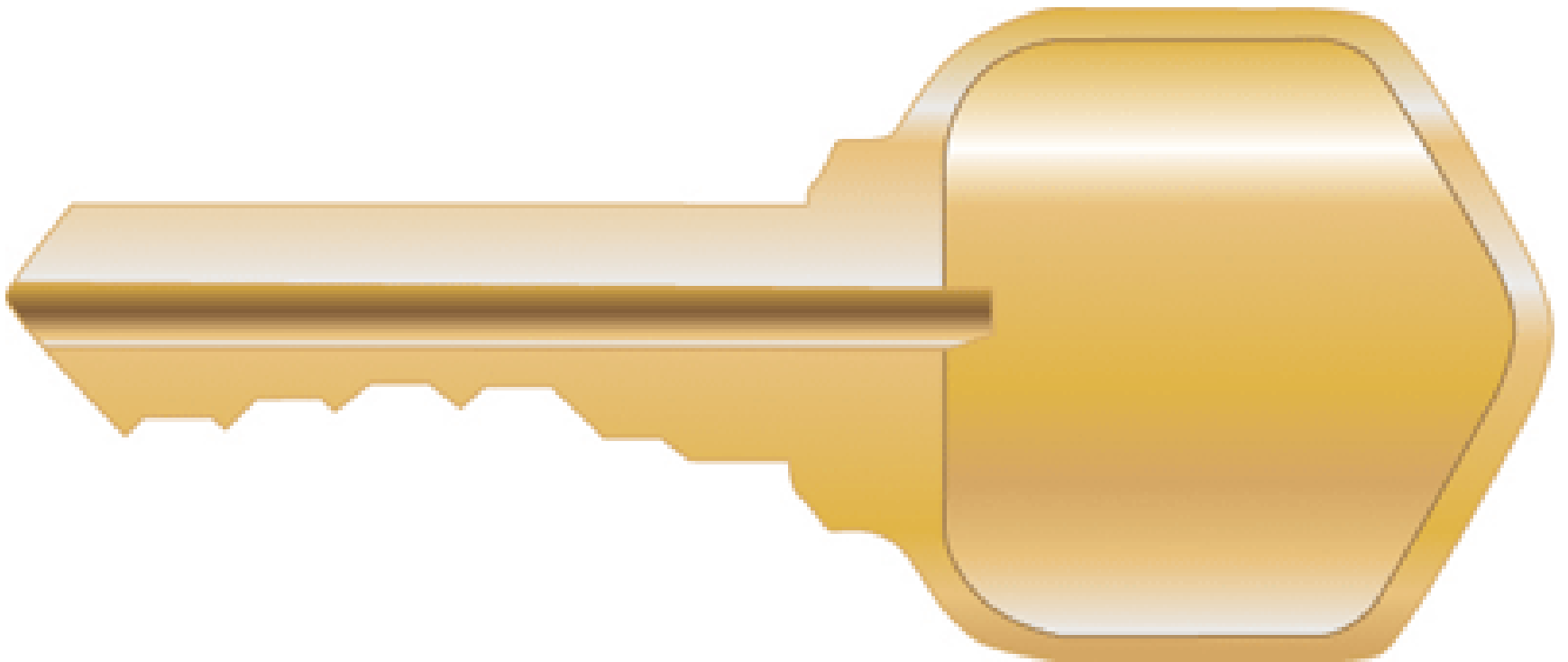
“Peaceable”

Because there is an unholy peace with the world which makes no distinction between clean and unclean.

If we are not first pure, then being peaceable with the world will be a disaster.



**“Thus ‘purity’ is not just one quality among others
but the key to them all.”**



Psalm 24:1-5

1 The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it. **2** For
He has founded it upon the seas And
established it upon the rivers. **3** Who may
ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who
may stand in His holy place? **4** He who has
clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not
lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not
sworn deceitfully. **5** He shall receive a blessing
from the Lord And righteousness from the
God of his salvation.

2. This Wisdom is “Peaceable”

- Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
- “Peace” is a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

Pure and
Peaceable
Wisdom Creates
Right
Relationships

Inside the Church: Romans 14:19

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Outside the Church: 1 Peter 2:12

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

What “Peaceable” Does NOT Mean



3. This Wisdom is “Gentle”

- Proverbs 15:1a – “A gentle answer turns away wrath...”
- And James told us back in 1:20 – “the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

A Difficult Translation (*epieikēs*)

- Aristotle defined it as that “which is just beyond the written law” and as “justice and better than justice” and as that “which steps in to correct things when the law itself becomes unjust.”
- The poet Matthew Arnold called it “sweet reasonableness,” and it is the ability to extend to others the kindly consideration we would wish to receive ourselves.
- It is essentially anti-legalism.

The Gentleness of Christ

- Matthew 11:29 –

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”



4. This Wisdom is “Reasonable”

- The Greek is εὐπειθής (*eupeithēs*), and it is used only here in Scripture.
- It may also be translated, “submissive” or “compliant.”

It is “reasonable” in the sense that where gentleness is present, there is also a willingness to yield.



My ruthless desire to win at all costs served me well on the bike but the level it went to, for whatever reason, is a flaw. That desire, that attitude, that arrogance.

— *Lance Armstrong* —

AZ QUOTES



5. This Wisdom is “Full of Mercy & Good Fruits”

- What is mercy?
 - Forgiving others
 - Loving before judging
 - Generosity

This characteristic is in direct contrast to “disorder and every evil thing” in v. 16.

What is Different About the Christian Understanding of Mercy?



Later, in James 5:7-9

6. This Wisdom is “Unwavering”

- James continues his assault on double-mindedness in the Christian life.
- The wisdom is unwavering because it is connected to a new heart that is committed to purity and singleness of thought.
- The unwavering man's actions match his words.

May it be said of us:

- This horse has a bit in its mouth.
- **This ship has a strong rudder.**
- This Christian is not “double-minded” or “unstable.”
- **This Christian is devoted to Godly wisdom over worldly wisdom.**
- This Christian is unwavering.

Joshua 24:15

“If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”



7. This Wisdom is “Without Hypocrisy”

- Or perhaps, with sincerity.
- This connects well with the previous unwavering idea, as a sincere Christian without hypocrisy removes discord and promotes unity.





James 3:18

18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Righteousness Loves Peace

- **Psalm 72:7** – “In his days may the *righteous* flourish, And abundance of *peace* till the moon is no more.”
- **Isaiah 32:17** – “And the work of *righteousness* will be *peace*...”
- **Hebrews 12:11** – “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the *peaceful* fruit of *righteousness*.”



Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are
the
peacemakers,
for they shall
be called sons
of God.”

This Was Supposed to be Israel

- Exodus 19:5-6a –

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

And Now It's Us!

- 1 Peter 2:9 –

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”



Peace Between

**Man and Man should be sought
in everything that we do.**

**However, our primary concern
as representatives of the Prince
of Peace is to invite others into
peace between God and man.**

The Heart of Jesus' Teachings

- Peacemakers act like a sower who sows the seed of peace.
- Like God, who sows the seed of the living Word, believers are to sow peaceable deeds that will produce a harvest of righteousness.
- These peaceful acts are the deeds of mercy, and this harvest is the good fruit mentioned in the previous verse.



Matthew 13:18-23



In Other Words:

We are all trying to reap the harvest which a good life brings. But the seeds which bring the rich harvest can never flourish in any atmosphere other than one of right relationships between individuals. And the only people who can sow these seeds and reap the reward are those whose life work it has been to produce such right relationships.

John Calvin on “peacemakers”

“Those truly wise towards God, while peaceable and tolerant towards their neighbors, yet make it their chief concern to sow righteousness, not cloaking men’s sins, but reproving them with such peaceable moderation as to be the physicians, rather than the executioners, of sinners.”



The Christian Life is

Intentional

Positive growth cannot
happen amidst disorder.

A dark, atmospheric image featuring Batman in a tactical suit. He is seen from the back, with his arms outstretched horizontally. The suit is detailed with straps and buckles. In the background, another figure in a Batman suit is visible, standing in a dimly lit, industrial-looking environment. The overall tone is serious and dramatic.

Our Job Is NOT to Be
Antagonists

Even Though...

Our message of the gospel may often be seen as antagonistic.

“the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

In Matthew 23:34 –

- Jesus explains how the world often reacts to Godly wisdom:

“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city”

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, **19** namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

For the Church

- A church that is rich in reconciling activities, such as evangelism, counseling, hospitality, missions, and faithful preaching, produces a rich harvest of righteousness.
- Wherever the church is doing these things, the kingdom of God is evident.

Matthew 6:33

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

One Commentator said:

“Winsome speech comes from a wise spirit. A controlled tongue is possible only with cultured thought. A mouth filled with praise results from a mind filled with purity.”

And as Chapter 3 Ends...

- James has warned against many things that do not bear the fruit of good works:
 - Double-mindedness (1:9)
 - Hearing without doing (1:25-26)
 - Preferring one over another (2:9)
 - Faith without works (2:26)
 - Unwise teaching (3:1)
 - An uncontrolled tongue (3:8-9)
 - Worldly wisdom (3:15-16)



Are You Searching For Peace?

- In Isaiah 9:6, Christ is called “Prince of Peace.”
- In 2 John 3, we are promised, “peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father...”
- In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul prays that “the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely.”
- In Philippians 4:7, we hear that “the peace of God...surpasses all comprehension”



There is Only One Source

True peace is found only in
the character of God.

