

**James 3:13-18**  
**Wisdom from Hell vs. Wisdom from Heaven, Part 5**  
**May 28, 2006**  
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I was reminded this week that things aren't always what they appear, especially when it comes to advertising. You see this constantly in the fine print, or there's the half-filled cereal box and somewhere on the package the manufacturer adds this little line, "contents may have settled during transport." Who are they kidding? Or there's real estate, that's another sort of advertising Mecca. You know you see that little line, "wonderful starter home". It sounds like such a wonderful thing, doesn't it? In reality, it means that you will need more money than Fort Knox to fix that home, and it will require more effort than any single family is willing to expend to make the place livable.

Well this concept of advertising, mislaying the truth, is not a new problem. You may have not thought much of Greenland. Greenland is the world's largest island. It may also be history's greatest real estate development scheme. Eric the Red, who you've probably heard about in history class, Eric the Red was a Viking who was forced to leave his home in Iceland after a brutal fight in which he killed a couple of his countrymen. And in 982 Eric the Red sailed west and arrived at a new land. But he soon discovered that what we call Greenland was anything but. It was a terribly bleak place. Most of the island lies north of the Arctic Circle and 85% of Greenland is perpetually covered in a thick coating of ice.

So, Eric the Red had a problem. He didn't want to live there by himself; he wanted to encourage other Icelandic peoples to come and move there with him. But who would want to live in such a place? So, he deliberately named the island Greenland, a clever advertising ploy. And those Icelanders, they bought it hook, line and sinker. In fact, 25 boats filled with 400 to 500 settlers made the journey from Iceland to Greenland. What a misnomer. Eleven of the boats were lost on the journey. Only 14 of them arrived, but when they arrived, they soon discovered that what had happened is they had been taken in by history's biggest real estate scam. It wasn't at all what they expected. They should have read the fine print.

Just as in the physical world, I was reminded that in the spiritual world things are not always as they appear. You can't always believe the label. You can't always put your confidence in the promises that advertising sets forth. What is advertised may not be in fact what you are getting.

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And that's what James has been trying to tell us throughout his letter. That the label Christian does not make a person a Christian. And that the advertising of a righteous person may be, in fact, false advertising. And he's made this point very pointedly in the last section of James 3. This morning we come to our last look at these verses. I hope you've enjoyed the journey as much as I have. But we're going to complete this paragraph this morning. Let me read it for you again one last time, James 3 beginning in verse 13.

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

As we've learned over the last four weeks these verses contrast two distinct kinds of wisdom. There is the truly biblically wise man or woman who is characterized by true spiritual maturity, who has embraced the wisdom of God as it's set forth in this book. But there is also a second kind of wisdom that James wants to warn us about. There is a kind of person who thinks he lives by God's wisdom. He's convinced himself. He may even have convinced others by using pious language, by showing off his biblical knowledge, by spending lots of time in spiritual exercises. But this person has, in fact, embraced a counterfeit wisdom. It's not the real thing. It has its origins in demons and those opposed to God.

In previous weeks we've examined how it is we can recognize this counterfeit wisdom, so I'm not going to go there this morning. Last week we began to look in verses 17 and 18 at James' analysis of heaven's wisdom or true Godly wisdom. We saw the source of that wisdom. It is the wisdom, verse 17 says, "that comes down from above" that is, it comes from God. It is a gift of God's grace. Listen carefully; the seed of wisdom always accompanies genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ. At the moment of your salvation, if you're in Christ, God planted within you the seed of Godly wisdom, and that seed, Scripture tells us, slowly grows into a full harvest of wisdom throughout our lives as we use the means that God has provided; chiefly the Word of God. That's the source of God's wisdom.

We also noted last week the chief characteristic of heaven's wisdom. You remember back in verse 13 we learned one key quality of Godly wisdom is "gentleness". That is "a calm trusting acceptance of God's providence in our lives," and it's a humble, gracious, gentle spirit toward others. That's an important part of wisdom.

But in verse 17, we saw last week there is a second key quality that's always associated with this wisdom. We could even call this the chief characteristic of heaven's wisdom; it is "purity". The wisdom that is from above is first pure. First means, "chief, foremost of first importance". James means that purity is logically foundational to the other virtues of wisdom.

Now what is this purity? Well, we discovered that "pure" has primarily two senses in the New Testament. One is moral or sexual purity, free from defilement of sins of a sexual variety. And secondly, it means devotional purity or whole hearted inward devotion to Christ, but really the two go together. That's the chief characteristic of spiritual maturity or Godly wisdom; it is first and foremost pure.

Now that brings us to the end of where we left off last time and to the last part of verse 17. In the last part of Ja of verse 17, James lists for us what I would call the complimentary characteristic of heaven's wisdom; the complimentary characteristics of heaven's wisdom. We've seen the chief one, purity is the chief quality. But with the word then, we transition out of the state of the heart which is purity to how Godly wisdom responds to others. Then means afterwards importance, its first pure and then afterwards in importance it's these other things. We learned that there are seven other qualities that accompany a life lived in Godly wisdom.

Now it's clear, it's clear that James has already laid the foundation for these qualities. Look back in verse 13. If you have Godly wisdom you're going to show it in your deeds or in your wise actions. And in verse 13 he also says that those obedient actions will be sustained in what he calls, "good behavior" or as a way of life. And now he's going to tell us what those qualities are.

Now, in the Greek text there is something here that is not obvious in English. It's clear in the Greek text that James gave considerable thought to how to arrange these seven qualities. There are three groups, the first three all begin with the same Greek letter and have similar sounding endings. And then the middle two as in English are subordinated with the word "full", and the last two begin with the same Greek letter and have a very similar metrical sound. Now why would James have bothered to do that? Remember, it is a letter after all. Well, remember that

James lived in a culture without a printing press. Not every individual member who heard this letter would have a copy for himself. In fact, the letter would be read in a corporate gathering of the church like this. And so, almost certainly, James arranges these qualities in such a way, he puts them in a sort of metrical, rhythmical setting to enable and encourage their memorization. Now we don't have to do that. We have multiple copies of James sitting on shelves around our house. But the fact that James wanted his first readers to memorize this list stresses its importance to us. Let's look briefly at these seven qualities that James thought were so important as to present them in a form that they could be easily remembered by those who heard this letter read.

The first is: peaceable. This word occurs only two times in the New Testament, here and Hebrews 12:11. There has always been, throughout Scripture, a connection between peace and wisdom. Listen to Proverbs 3:17 speaking of wisdom. It says, "[All wisdoms] ... paths are peace." Now what does it mean, "peace"? Well a leading dictionary of Greek words says that this word peaceful means "ready for peace", ready for peace. Now this does not mean acquiescence in everything. You know some people don't want confrontation, they don't want trouble, and so they just give in constantly. They're always after peace, so whenever there's confrontation, they just immediately give in. That's not what this is talking about.

It's not like the man who was asked how he and his wife had managed to have so few arguments in 50 years of marriage. And he said, "Well you know when we were married, on the day we were married we agreed together that we would do something to keep the conflict down in our relationship. We decided that I would make all the big decisions and that my wife would make all the small decisions. And we've done that faithfully, and in 50 years of marriage there has yet to be a big decision." It's not acquiescence, it's not giving in. Neither is it toleration of sin. It's not just sweeping things under the rug that are sinful in order to have peace. Nor, and this is important that you understand, is James encouraging compromise with or agreement with error.

A better definition of this word would be this, "peace loving". Peace loving. Listen there are times to fight. There are times to fight for purity, for holiness, for truth, but unfortunately there are some people, even preachers in Christian ministries that enjoy fighting. James says that a person who has this quality hungers for peace even while he's fighting, he doesn't enjoy it. Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God."

To be a peace maker or to be peaceable means two things; it means number one that you must seek to preserve peace where it exists, and secondly you must promote peace where it does not

exist. And the New Testament's full of examples of both. For example, in Ephesians 4:3, "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Preserve it.

Romans 14:19, "Pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." Pursue it, promote it, try to gain it. You say, but aren't there some people who just refuse to be at peace? Even when you try they just want to fight. Absolutely. In fact, I have known people like that in my life with whom you try to work things out, and all they want is a fight. Scriptures speak to that situation. Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

By the way, that isn't an excuse just to sort of give up. It's a challenge. Have you used every conceivable means and every resource you have to be at peace with others? One famous prayer says, "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace, where there is hate, may I bring love. Where offence, may I bring pardon. May I bring unison in place of discord." Those words if prayed sincerely from the heart embody the prayer of a truly spiritual person. Is that how people, the people who live with you the people who know you best, is that how they think of you? Are you known as a person who loves peace as a peace maker as a peaceable person?

The next quality number two is: gentle, gentle. Now this is not the same Greek word as the word gentleness back in verse 13. This word is best translated "bigheartedness or graciousness". Aristotle contrasted it with strict justice. It refers to a generous treatment of others. It's looking for the best in the worst of people. It's similar to our expression, cutting people slack. The commentator D. Edmond Hiebert says, "It conveys the thought of respect for the feeling of others, being willing to waive all rigor and severity in its dealings with others." You know it's wonderful that this is a quality of our God. Psalm 86:5 says, "You Lord are good" and the Septuagint uses the word "gentle".

It's true of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:1, "I Paul urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." It's required of elders, 1 Timothy 3:3, and it's commanded of every single Christian.

Turn to Philippians 4, in Philippians 4 Paul includes this in a list of ways to gain spiritual stability. He says, in verse 5, "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men." Be known for this quality of graciousness, bigheartedness with people. In Titus 3, he puts it this way, he says, Titus, teach the people in your church "to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle showing every consideration for all men."

You say how can you do that? How can you be gracious and bighearted toward people who are sinful and live such terrible lives? You don't know the guy I work with or the person I work with. You don't know how they talk or what they do. Well, Paul explains how it is we can keep this perspective here in Titus 3. After he tells Titus to teach this he says here's the motivation, verse 3, "For [because, remember that] we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." [Here's how you can stay gracious in your mindset toward others even those who are living terrible lives of sin, those unbelievers who are all around us.]

John Blanchard relates a story about a man by the name of Dr. William Trumble. Trumble was traveling by train, and into his compartment came a man who was obviously drunk and sat down. The man pulled a bottle of liquor from his pocket, by the way in the last service I coughed at that moment and took a drink from my water. Let me assure you that this is water that I'm drinking. The man pulled a bottle of liquor from his pocket and offered Dr. Trumble a drink. Trumble replied, "No thank you, I don't drink." Over the next couple of hours the same interchange happened a couple more times. Finally, after the third exchange the man seemed to feel a sense of shame, and he said to Trumble, "You probably think I'm a beast." Trumble immediately responded, "On the contrary, I think you're a very generous man." Trumble could have preached against his drunkenness, he could have left the compartment in disgust, but instead he looked for the best in the worst of men. By the way, that's not the end of the story. That man eventually came to faith in Christ because of Trumble's gentle spirit that day on the train.

Robert Johnstone writes, "The Christian man loves to make allowances for the ignorance and weaknesses of others, knowing how great need he stands in constantly of having allowance made for himself both by God and man." I can promise you that if you struggle with this gentleness, this big heartedness, this graciousness toward others, it's because you and I have not fully come to appreciate our own situation. Are you a "peace-loving" peacemaker? Are you gracious with people?

The third quality is: reasonable. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is found. The Greek word is a compound word. It comes from two Greek words, one meaning "easy" and the other "to be persuaded". It literally means to be "easily persuaded". Now that doesn't mean we should be gullible. Instead, it means that we should be easy to be entreated. It's a willingness to listen to others and even to learn from them. It's the opposite of stubbornness. Douglass Moo says, "It's a willing deference to others when unalterable theological and moral principles are not involved." A deference to others when the heart of our

faith isn't at stake. There are a lot of illustrations of this biblically, but the one that stands out to me is back in 1 Samuel. Turn there for a moment, 1 Samuel 25. It's the story of David and Abigail. I wish there were time to trace through this entire passage. I encourage you to read it at some point, it's very interesting. We don't have that time, so let me just hit the highlights. First Samuel 25:2,

... *there was* [this] man ... whose business ... [made him very ... [wealthy] ... he had three thousand sheep, ... a thousand goats.... ... "his name was Nabal."  
Verse 3, ... his wife's name ... Abigail, ... the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in *his* dealings.

David and his men are out there and David sends to this man for help for himself and his warriors that are with him. They have already assisted Nabal and Nabal's shepherds as that plays out in the story, verse 9, so they come and ask,

... David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. But Nabal answered David's servants and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master." [In other words, I don't have any respect for his authority, I don't care who he is. He's probably just another want to be king.] "Shall I ... take my bread and my water and my meat which I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I ... [don't even] know?"

So David, of course, his men go back and tell him what's happened, verse 13, he says, each of you gird on your sword, David girded on his, about 400 men went up. They're going for one purpose and that is kill Nabal and every male in his household because he's in state of rebellion against the king.

Abigail hears about it, Nabal's wife, and Abigail goes to appeal to David, verse 26 she comes to David, she says, "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, since the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal."

She brought a gift, she asked for forgiveness for her husband, and she says, don't do this. Because verse 31, if you will stop now, "this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself."

Notice David's response, now David had a right to be angry and he had already been anointed king, and so he felt like he had authority behind him, he had been angered by the way this man had responded to him and yet notice how he responds. Notice the reasonableness of his response, verse 32,

... David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to ... me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand."

And he says what his plan was in verse 34 and at the end of verse 35 he says, "Go up to your house in peace. I have listened to you and granted your request." [That's reasonable.]

There are a lot of other illustrations of it. One secular one came to mind. Ken Hughes relates the story of Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln caved in at one point during the war to political pressure from a certain politician, and he commanded Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, to transfer several regiments to a different position than they were currently stationed. When Stanton received Lincoln's order, he refused to carry it out, and he suggested that the President was a fool. When Lincoln heard that this was Stanton's response and what Stanton had said, this is what Lincoln said. "If Stanton said that I am a fool, then I must be for he is nearly always right, I'll see for myself." Lincoln talked with Stanton, quickly realized that what he had ordered was a huge mistake, and he retracted the order. That is being reasonable.

But you and I both know people who aren't. There are people who are so entrenched in their own views that they are completely unwilling to listen to others. No matter how much advice is brought to them, nor how much council, they always cling to their own position. The Bible says that kind of person is a fool. Proverbs 26:16, "The sluggard" [one of the fools of Proverbs] "is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet answer."

You put a fool in a room with seven people who bring good and wise council, who all agree contrary to this man, and he'll still cling to his own opinion. I can guarantee you that when someone is known for being unreasonable like that, he or she is not a deeply spiritual person at all no matter the façade they may present. Reasonable.



Number four: full of mercy, full of mercy. Mercy, of course, is a common biblical word, but it's often misunderstood. It is not a feeling that overpowers you. It includes feeling. It's a kind of sympathy toward another person's distress that motivates us to action and to help. So, it's sympathy in action. Its pity with clothes on and with work clothes on ready to move and act, respond. This is true of God, Psalm 86:15 says, "You, O Lord, are a God merciful." Psalm 103:8, "Yahweh is merciful or compassionate." Ephesians 2:4, "our God is rich in mercy."

There's an illustration of mercy that I love in Psalm 103:13. It says that "as a father has compassion [or mercy] on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those that fear Him." In other words, compassion or mercy is what you feel when you look down in the crib at that tiny helpless babe and what you do to alleviate that distress and that discomfort when you care for that child. God demands, not only does He have this quality, but He demands the same of all of us who genuinely know Him. In fact, Christ often pointed out that the quality of mercy is a key marker of whether or not a person belongs to God at all. In Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Matthew 23:23, Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees there, telling them the woes that He pronounces upon them, and He says, "Woe to you, ... Pharisees, ... [because] you tithe ... [your spices but you] ... have neglected the weightier provisions of the law."

What were those weightier provisions? Well the one He names immediately is mercy, mercy. And in Luke 10:37, Jesus at the conclusion of the story of the Good Samaritan, as He's comparing the actions of the Good Samaritan with those that walk by; He says which of these showed mercy to this man? And of course, they respond: the Samaritan, He says, "go and do likewise." This is a huge priority for the person who's in Christ. And this quality, notice, isn't just to be found in us just in traces, in minute traces, but we're to be full of mercy. We're to be characterized by this quality, of compassion and concern for those in distress and moving to alleviate that distress.

Number five: full of good fruits. Now since James connects this to mercy, both sharing the word full, he probably means that the truly wise man or woman will be known for many acts of practical mercy. You see the Greek's perspective of wisdom as I told you a number of weeks ago was all in the mind, it's all cerebral. Wisdom is what you know. And our culture has adopted that same kind of perspective, but James wants us to know that if you truly possess God's wisdom, it will produce a rich harvest of fruit in your life. This is such a constant theme of our Lord's. Let me just show you briefly, turn to Matthew 3. Matthew 3:10, and I'm just

going to breeze you through one gospel just so you can see how our Lord hammered this point on different theme's again and again. Matthew 3:10, here is John the Baptist saying, "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

When Jesus comes, He says the same thing, Matthew 7:17, verse 16 talking about false prophets here,

"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Chapter 12:33, Jesus makes the same point, here revealing talking about how our words reveal the nature of our tree if you will or the nature of our hearts.

"Either" [Verse 33] "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of *his* good treasure what is good; the evil man out of *his* evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."

In 13:23 there again in talking about the kind of soil that yields the right kind of fruit, he says that "... the one on whom the seed was sown on the good soil, [The good heart] "this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." You see Jesus always connected life with fruit. Where there's genuine life there's fruit.

Paul does the same thing, Colossians 1:10, "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work." What does this mean then to be full of good fruits practically full of practical mercies to the people around us? That's what he's talking about. That shows the reality of whether or not we're what we claim to be. John Blanchard writes,

A Christian should not only be growing in his knowledge of God, he should also be the best neighbor a man could have. When there is an accident or sickness in a neighbor's home, when some crisis arises, when some need appears, the Christian should be the first to offer help because Godly wisdom has provided him with a store of good fruit, full of good fruits.

Back to James 3:17, the sixth quality that biblical wisdom produces in the life is: unwavering. The Greek word literally means not divided. It could mean either impartial, that is not given to partiality, it's translated that way in the *King James* and the -self-correction *New International Version*. Or it could also mean unwavering without vacillation; which is the approach the *NAS* translators took, and I think best reflects the flow of James' argument here. This would be the opposite of unstable. It would mean that wisdom acts consistently. True biblical wisdom is stable and steady it stays on course. James has already made this point back in James 1:6, "But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind."

He says, listen, that instability is connected not to faith, but to doubting. Paul makes the same point in Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4 talking about Spiritual maturity and immaturity, he says when the church functions like its supposed to function, 14, "we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." You see maturity brings stability. It brings consistently. That's his point.

Now none of us is ever exempt from this problem. Instability can always be a temptation to us and can be something we can slip into if we aren't guarded and protected by the Word of God. But as long as we live our lives tied to this book, it brings us the stability of the very mind of God Himself. There is in the life of a spiritually wise, mature person a consistency and a stability that is clear to those around him.

The seventh quality of biblical wisdom, the end of verse 17 is: without hypocrisy. This final quality is literally "not playing a part". You see the wise person doesn't hide behind a mask because he's got nothing to hide. Several years ago, I heard an account about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the *Sherlock Holmes Mysteries*. Conan Doyle reported that he once sent telegrams to twelve friends of his, all of whom were well known and highly respected. Each telegram contained only these brief words, "Fly at once, all is discovered." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reported afterwards that within 24 hours all twelve men had left the country. Now that may have been an exaggeration on his part, but nevertheless it drives home the point that not

everyone is what he seems to be. Are you? Or do you live behind a mask? If you do, then you're not spiritually mature, you are not biblically wise. You have bought into a counterfeit wisdom.

Perhaps this morning you are genuine, you are sincere, you don't wear a mask. Don't think for a moment that you can't again become susceptible to that. Even the Apostle Peter became susceptible to that. If we were to turn to Galatians 2 you would learn there that Paul says that Peter gave in, in the situation so that he was hypocritical, he put on a mask. Why, to gain reputation with the people around him; the people that came from James and from Jerusalem. None of us is ever exempt from the temptation to wear a mask or to be hypocritical in order to gain a reputation or to make ourselves look good. But where there is biblical wisdom, we can be consistently genuine and sincere. And this genuineness that we're encouraged to have, this lack of hypocrisy; in the New Testament it expresses itself in three ways.

If you are unhypocritical, then it means three things; one it means that you will always do your spiritual exercises to be seen by God and not by people. Matthew 6, Jesus says, "don't play the part of a hypocrite, don't put on a mask and pray so others see, give so others see, fast so others see, instead do it so God sees." So genuineness and sincerity in our faith means that we do those things to be seen by God.

Secondly, if we're genuine, it will express itself in a genuine faith that doesn't put on a mask in order to build our reputation. First Timothy 1:5 or 2 Timothy 1:5, "our faith must be genuine and sincere."

And thirdly, if we're going to be genuine and sincere we must have a genuine sincere love of our Christian brothers and sisters; 2 Corinthians 6:6, and 1 Peter 1:22. Do you really love the people in this room this morning? I mean could you honestly say before God that you love them? A genuine faith expresses itself in a genuine love for people and for people of God.

So, James 3:17 lays out the qualities like this; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without hypocrisy. Those are the characteristics of Godly wisdom. But James has one more thing that briefly he wants us to know about heaven's wisdom, and that's in verse 18, the results; the results. "And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Now I don't know about you but in English that's a very hard verse to understand. Let me give you the flow of James' thought. Look back in verse 16, and you'll see that James says there that false wisdom produces two things; disorder and every evil thing. That's what false, counterfeit wisdom produces.

Now in verse 18 on the other hand he wants us to know that true wisdom produces peace, there's the opposite of disorder and a harvest of righteousness. There's the opposite of every evil thing. So, he wants us to know that these two kinds of wisdom produce fruit that is totally opposite from each other. I think the *NIV* captures the sense here, "peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." You see James wants to make a negative point and a positive point. Negatively, he wants us to understand that righteousness, listen carefully, righteousness cannot be cultivated where there is a climate of jealousy and selfish ambition and strife and conflict. And positively, he wants us to know that because of the atmosphere of peace they create that peacemakers produce a harvest of righteousness.

Now why is it that a harvest of righteousness is so important? If you're a believer sitting here this morning that appeals to you, because God has put within you a desire to live a righteous life. But why is it important? Listen to Isaiah 61:3, speaking of a time yet in the future, "... they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, [in order] that He may be glorified."

In the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The results of true righteousness consist of a harvest of righteousness and peace. Now how should we apply this passage of Scripture? Well the primary application to the ones that James obviously intended here, and there are two of those. He makes clear how he intends for us to apply it, there are two applications both found in verse 13. The first application is to use this paragraph as a test. Look how he begins verse 13, "Who among you is wise and understanding?"

Do you think you are biblically wise? Would you describe yourself as spiritually mature? Okay, then test yourself and see. Are you characterized by gentleness, a spirit of submission to God's providence, of graciousness and gentleness with people? Are you morally and sexually pure? Are you wholly devoted to Jesus Christ? Are you known for being peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy?

Or instead are you filled with bitter jealousy? Do you often feel resentment against others because of their success and advantages? Do you have selfish ambition in your heart, or are you always trying to promote yourself? Do you cater to and embrace sensuality and a hidden life of sexual sin? Evaluate yourself. Each of those lists of qualities describe two totally different kinds of wisdom. One, genuinely biblical and the other counterfeit and pretend. Here are clear undeniable tests by which each of us can accurately evaluate our Spiritual maturity.

But there's a second application James wants to make here, look at verse 13 again. "Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom." You see this passage is not only a test, it's the answer key. It's not only a requirement, it's the road map. James says, as you test yourself if you find yourself short, then seek God's grace to begin to obey Him and to try to put these virtues on. Start to practice these things.

That's why he wanted us to be able to memorize them easily in the original text. It was so that those who heard this letter initially could have the road mapped out for them as the course they should follow in pursuing biblical wisdom and Spiritual maturity. Set a site on incorporating these virtues by the help and grace of God into your life. Study these things, think about them, try to put them on, ask for God's grace and help to do it. All the things we've learned in the study on sanctification.

There's a third thing here that's greatly encouraging, if you look at that list, that list of virtues in verse 17. All of them describe the character of our God. How can you expect God to respond to you? Listen, this is God's wisdom and to whatever extent we reflect these qualities is merely a reflection of God Himself. And so, this is how God is toward you and toward me. He's pure obviously. He's peaceable. He's gentle. He's reasonable. He's full of mercy. He's full of good fruits toward us, of good deeds and responses toward us; practical acts of mercy. He's constantly stable and consistent. His perspective on us never changes. And He's everything that He seems to be. God doesn't wear a mask. That's our God, and that's where we find hope even as we come short in our own examination of ourselves is in Him.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your wisdom. Thank You for this clear measurement this clear standard against which to measure ourselves. Lord, we thank You as well for giving us the road map to follow.

Father, help us to evaluate ourselves even as James has urged us to here. Help us to be honest and straightforward with ourselves. It's so hard for us to know our own hearts. Lord, help us to understand ourselves. And help us to see ourselves in the mirror of Your Word clearly. And Father, I pray that as we don't like what we see in that mirror that You'd give us Your grace to begin to pursue these things, to put on these virtues only by Your grace and by the help of Your Spirit. Father, may our church be known for these qualities.

Lord, I pray as well for the person here this morning who has seen themselves in the mirror of Your Word. As they've seen these qualities, they've realized that they are totally absent from their own life, they fail the test, that they're not even in Christ. Lord, I pray that this would be the day that You remove the blindness, that You speak the light in to some heart here.

I pray for the glory of Jesus Christ and His wonderful name, Amen.