

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Where to Get Wisdom James 3:13-18 Part Three

Let us read **James 3:13-18**, “**Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (18) And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**” Clearly the focus of this passage is wisdom.

We are constantly bombarded with various images of people that the world considers successful. And with each of those images there is a very subtle message that is communicated loud and clear. And that message is this: “Those who are truly wise are pursuing the goals that the world considers important.” But this is not the message of the Scriptures. Rather the message of the Scriptures is this: those who are truly wise have embraced Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Those who are truly wise are those who have been genuinely born again.

1 Cor. 1:18-24, “**For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.” (20) Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (22) For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; (23) but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to gentiles foolishness, (24) but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** Who are the truly wise? The truly wise are those who have embraced Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God. In embracing Jesus as their Lord and Savior they have embraced all of the wisdom of the universe. Listen to **Col. 2:1-3**, “**For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, (2) that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, (3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**” What great potential we have!! Because of our relationship with Christ we, and only we, can live life as it was meant to be lived and therefore we alone can be considered the truly wise.

How can we nurture our relationship with Christ so that we will continually enjoy more of that abundance? How can we nurture our relationship with Christ so that we will continually see more and more of His wisdom manifested in and through our lives?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

First of all we nurture our relationship with Christ and draw upon His wisdom by humbly meditating and carefully applying His Word to our lives. (Ps.119:97-100)

We nurture our relationship with Christ and draw upon His wisdom by humbly coming to Him in prayer. (James 1:5)

Those who have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior have received the power of God and the wisdom of God. We have within us an infinite supply of wisdom. What great potential we have! Let us get serious about tapping into these resources and let us live life as it should be lived as we humbly bow ourselves before the Lord by spending time in His word and coming to His throne of grace in prayer.

It is extremely important that we do this, not only in order to live life as Christ desires for us to live life, but also to assure ourselves that we in fact are the possessors of Christ's life who is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

How can we know if we are truly wise? We can only know this by seeing the wisdom of Christ manifested in our lives. This is why James gives us the challenge that we found in **v. 13, s#147;Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.** Are you wise only in your own eyes? Or are you wise in the sight of God? You will know this by the way you live your lives. You will know this if your life is characterized by Christ's wisdom. And even more specifically you will know this if your life is characterized by Christ's gentleness. This is what we should see.

What we should not see is a false wisdom. Therefore, after James gave us a specific challenge in v. 13, he then enters into an extended discussion of false wisdom in **vv. 14-16, “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”**

False Wisdom

James began by discussing the motivation of false wisdom. He gave us two different motivations: bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. Look **v. 14, “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.”** This weekend we will now go on to consider the characteristics of false wisdom.

Hopefully this morning as we once again examine this section of Scripture we will continue to grow in our understanding of false wisdom and be further stimulated to draw upon the wisdom of Christ.

Characteristics of False Wisdom

Let us read **v. 15, “This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.”** Here James briefly presents three of the most distinct and basic characteristics of false, ungodly wisdom.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Here James briefly presents three of the most distinct and basic characteristics of that wisdom which does not “come down from above.”

The three great enemies of the believer are the world, the flesh, and the devil. These three great enemies correspond to the three characteristics of false wisdom that James mentions here.

The first characteristic of false wisdom is that it is earthly. It is earthly because it is limited to the present, material world of time and space. It is a closed system. By definition it has no place for God or the things of God. It has no place for spiritual truth or illumination.

When men are characterized by false wisdom it is as if they are living their lives in a box. Without any help from the outside, without any assistance from the outside they are trying to make the most of their lives with what is available to them in the box. They are totally cut off from God’s resources. It would seem that this isolation would produce a sense of despair in them. And in some of them it does. But for most people it doesn’t. Somehow the vast majority of mankind try to make the best of their situation and even take pride in their efforts. How can this be explained? Let us look at the next characteristic.

The second characteristic of false wisdom is that it is “natural” (PSUCHIKE). It comes from a Greek word (PSUCHE) which means “pertaining to the life of the soul.” In biblical usage the word relates to “the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to the natural world, in contrast to the supernatural world. The term does not refer to the gross lusts of the flesh but rather denotes that which is essentially human life apart from God as contrasted to life imparted by God, devoid of the Spirit of God, hence “unspiritual.” They are able to live their lives inside of the box without outside help because they do not accept and cannot accept that there is help outside of the box.

We see this term used in **1 Cor. 2:14** where it says, **“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”** Those who are earthly are in a box and they are trying to make the best out of their lives using the things that they have available to them in the box. What do they have in the box? They have themselves. But they are flawed. They are flawed because they are natural and unable to understand, appreciate, or appropriate true wisdom. The reason why this does not lead them to despair is because this is all they know or ever can know as long as they remain in this “natural” condition. They just don’t know any better. In fact they do not even know that they have a problem.

Another way of looking at their condition would be to say with the Apostle Paul in **Eph. 2:5** that they are **“dead in their transgressions.”** Not physically dead but spiritually dead. They are alive and breathing but cut off from any sense of their own deadness. They are cut off from any sense of their spiritual separation from God. They are cut off from any sense that they are in fact in a box.

There is a movie that I believe that is still playing in the theaters called “Sixth Sense.” And it is a movie about a man who was shot and killed, who was in fact dead, separated from world as he had known it but was not aware of it. He was oblivious to the true reality. And that is exactly what is true of the natural man. He is dead, spiritually dead and does not know it.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Those characterized by false wisdom are like dead men entombed in the box of this world along with many other dead men. All trying to get the most out of their “lives” as they know it. Even at times getting a sense of satisfaction when they believe they have accomplished something significant, whatever that significant thing might be. But the reality is that they are dead and they have no understanding of what it means to be alive and to live life abundantly.

What characterizes the wisdom of this world? It is earthly and it is natural. It is cut off from outside help and it does not even know it. But how can this be? How can those who are cut off from the Lord and the wisdom from above be so blind? This leads us to the third characteristic of false wisdom.

The third characteristic of false wisdom is that it is demonic. Look again at vv. 13-15, **“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth (15) this wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly (cut off from God), natural (spiritually dead and unaware of what could be), demonic.”**

The word “demonic” (DAIMONIODES) literally means “demonical” and stamps false wisdom as demonic in character.

The term “demonic” does not relate to the devil personally; in Scripture, Satan is never called a demon, and the great host of his ministers are never spoken of as devils. There is only one devil, Satan, but there are vast numbers of demons who further Satan’s work. And certainly high of the list on Satan’s tasks is to keep those who are characterized by false wisdom in darkness.

Listen to the words of 2 Cor. 4:1-4, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, (2) but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) In whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”** The reason the person who possesses false wisdom can be cut off from God and the wisdom from above and be oblivious to it all is because false wisdom has its roots in the kingdom of darkness.

If this is so how can we ever come to the place where we will be able to no longer be characterized by false wisdom? It is and has to be the work of God. It begins with our salvation.

We should never think that if someone comes to Christ and embraces the gospel that it was our work. We are not strong enough to overcome the demonic forces behind false wisdom rather it is fully the work of God. Which is Paul’s point in 2 Cor. 4:5-6, **“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus sake.**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

(6) For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” If someone comes to Jesus and embraces Him as his Savior and his Lord, if someone comes to Jesus and sees Him as the very expression of the glory of God, if someone comes to have life and have it abundantly, it has nothing to do with them or with us, but rather it has everything to do with God who has shone in their hearts.

Think about this for a moment. If you remove the Spirit of God and those that He has enlightened from this world there would be a whole lot of darkness.

In fact, it is only the power of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the righteous that presently protects the world from an absolutely satanic environment. But this will not always be the case. There is a day coming when the Church of Jesus Christ and God’s Holy Spirit will make a very sudden exit. And the event that marks that exodus is called the Rapture. When both the Church and the Spirit, which indwells the church, are removed, Satan and his demons will cause hell to literally break loose. No longer will there be a wisdom from above, there will only be that wisdom which is earthly, natural, and demonic.

Listen to the words of Paul in **2 Thess. 2:6-12**, **"You know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."**

The great demonic delusion that will fall on the remaining, unbelieving world at that time of the tribulation will not be anything new but will rather be the full unleashing of the demonic delusion that has gripped unredeemed men since the Fall. The malignant infection that began at the fall and which continues even to this day and which culminates during the tribulation will not end until the Lord returns in judgment at the end of the Great Tribulation and ushers in His Millennial Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

But this world is not presently in total darkness. Remember the teaching of 2 Cor. 4:4. We have the glorious light of the gospel in our possession which according to Rom. 1:16 is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

The world’s wisdom is earthly, natural, and demonic. The world in its wisdom is cut off from God, oblivious to their hopeless condition and shackled by the kingdom of darkness. But they can be set free from their spiritual deadness through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This is our work. This is our mission. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let us show it by our conduct in the gentleness of wisdom. And I cannot think of a more demonstrative tender and gracious thing that we can do than to come alongside of the helpless and hopeless and share with them the good news of the gospel.