

James 25-07-13a

Greetings. It's July 13th, 2025. This is Grace and Truth Bible Church.

We're in the book of James chapter one, resuming at verse 20. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. This is our resumption point.

We're going to be looking this morning at the concept of wisdom that we requested back in verse five and six. James describes this wisdom. It's really important if we have asked for wisdom and a course of action suggests itself to us, we have a thought that seems to move us forward in a situation.

Is it the wisdom of God? Is this the answer to my prayer that I prayed in faith, nothing doubting, not wanting to be an unstable person, not being double-minded in my ways, not blown about by circumstance. So if there is a way forward, is this the wisdom of God? How do I know that this is the answer to my prayer? Helpfully, this book gives us the answer and we can know confidently that just as we prayed with no doubt, we can move forward implementing the wisdom of God with no doubt, no hesitation, no second guessing. What a gift from God to have this divine guidance.

So we'll see that this morning. And this is all in connection with our approach, our approach that avoids the impulsiveness and the anger that can so often afflict us and divert us and to truly accomplish the righteousness of God as we implement this requested wisdom. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study.

We'll dive right in. Father, what an immense privilege, what an opportunity for us to claim your promise, to approach boldly, to obtain mercy and find grace, to help in time of need. We are so wonderfully blessed to be called your children, to have these potentials, the resource, the gift of your spirit, the power of the truth of your word, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for him. We thank you for the tremendous sacrifice that he made on our behalf, no greater love than what he expressed for us and making it possible for us to be where we are and to claim these wonderful promises and principles and doctrines from your word. We pray that as we look at them together, that God, the Holy Spirit will bless them to each of our hearts.

May we enjoy the fruit of your Holy Spirit with love in all of its manifestations, the joy that comes from our salvation, the peace that passes all understanding. May we be a blessing to one another and to those in our periphery and in all things. May the Lord Jesus be glorified.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Without taking time to review, you remember the content of this chapter and the testing that comes to all of us.

It has a positive purpose. God allows it. God orchestrates it.

God measures it and calibrates it so that it does not destroy us. He never leads us into evil by

means of it. He is not tested or tempted by evil, and nor does he test or tempt any one of us in a bad direction.

The testing and challenge that we encounter is to produce patience that has a perfect work in us and makes us perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father, as we saw. Of his own will, in verse 18, he brought us forth by the word of truth.

We saw last time this wonderful contrast between our own desires when they conceive within us and bring forth sin. Sin, if it's allowed to continue and get its growth, brings forth death, all kinds of death, death of fruitfulness, death of relationships, death of opportunities. As we have often reviewed, good decisions open up our options.

Bad decisions close those options off. And there is a way that seems right, but the ends thereof are death, loss of opportunity, loss of fruitfulness, being a dead branch instead of one that is so fruitful. God has to prune it so that it can bear even more fruit.

He begot us, instead of what sin begets, what our desires beget within us, God begot us by the word of truth. We went through all of the places where we are warned, do not be deceived. The heart is deceitful above all things.

We can deceive ourselves. He brought us forth by the word of truth so that we could be first fruits, fruitful, a fruitful result of God's plan of salvation, of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, that we are a blessing. We are a positive reflection of God's light and God's power, God's grace and God's glory in this world.

So then, verse 19, this is where we pick up this morning. My beloved brethren, let everyone be swift to hear, swift to listen. This word is tachous.

It's where we get tachometer, measure the speed of the revolution of something. And it means to be quick. This is the word that Jesus uses in Revelation, behold, I come, tachous, quickly, before you know it, there it is.

And when there is an opportunity to listen, this is one of the hardest things. We are all in the grip of our, I am right meter. And it makes us in a conversation often just be waiting for someone to create a gap in the conversation so that we can continue to express our rightness.

This verse militates against that. And if you're like me, this is one of the great tests of life is to be quick to listen, to be quiet, to hear what is going to be said, whether it is from another person. Most importantly, if we have asked for wisdom from God, we have to be still and know that he is God.

We have to open our ear. And to do that, we have to be silent in his presence and in the presence of his word to reflect and meditate on his word, to pray his word back in humility, in peacefulness and in quiet and to be quick, quick to listen. Oh, here's an opportunity to listen.

Here's a presentation of the word of God. Doesn't matter where it comes from. As long as it is, in fact, the word of truth, we have been begotten by the word of truth.

It reminds us of what Paul says when he says, as you have received Christ, so walk in him. Similarly, because we have been born by the word of truth, we should walk in truth. We are told to walk by faith.

We are told to walk in love. And we are encouraged to walk in truth, to remain in the truth, to be characterized by it, to reflect it. And we are not the source of truth.

It has to come to us from God, from the outside. And in order to receive the truth, to have the engrafted word, we have to be quick to listen, to ponder. Remember Mary, the mother of the Lord, having heard the truth of God from Gabriel, treasured these things up in her heart and pondered them.

She thought about them. It would be a completely different Hail Mary, wouldn't it? If she had said, now, Gabriel, wait a minute. I've got a few questions here.

I want to tell you some things about my life. Do you know what's going to happen if I become with child and I'm not married to Joseph yet? Do you know what the community is going to think of me? What kind of a testimony is that? How am I going to do this when we don't have the structures of a marriage yet? And Joseph is liable to divorce me, to call off the betrothal and the marriage, and I'll be a pariah and an outcast. And how are you going to have me raise this supposed son of yours as a single mother, driven out by society and shamed and embarrassed? And this is a terrible idea.

Lord, let me explain to you how this really ought to go. You should have someone in a royal palace and have him be born in prominence and in visibility and with sufficient support so that when he gets ready to spread it and have a whole human notion of how the Messiah should enter the world, not in Bethlehem, not traveling to Egypt, not up in Nazareth. Can any good thing come from Galilee? And yet this is where the Lord Jesus is going to be raised and from which he will launch his ministry.

And he isn't going to surround himself with sages and scholars and respected men of religious wisdom, Galilean fishermen, despised tax collectors, zealots, and others on the fringe of respectability will be his companions. It is counter to our expectations. It is counter to our human wisdom and our ideas of what would be best.

But if we listen as Mary did, if we listen as Joseph did, her betrothed, when God told him, do not shame Mary. He got her into a private situation where she could have the child and Joseph stuck with it because this was the word of the Lord. Be quick to hear, quick to listen, slow to speak.

We remember that further on in this book, there is a lot said about the tongue and the man who can bridle the tongue. This book is going to introduce themes, go to other themes, and

then return to the first. And so this swift to hear and slow to speak is going to come back with bridling the tongue and the fire that can ignite the tongue if we are not very careful and do not avail ourselves of God's grace and God's power, which is beyond our own in the area of that great fruit of the spirit that bookends with love.

And that is self-control, self-control, swift. Everyone should be swift to hear. Everyone should be slow to speak.

Notice that it doesn't say you should be. It says everyone should be. And in the sphere of one another love, what kind of conversations should take place? They should be slow, carefully thought out, not driven by impulse or reaction or defensiveness.

And Lord knows our nature is the opposite of all of that. You listen to some of the political discourse. You listen to the opinion purveyors in the media and the wrangling and the heated and exaggerated hyper elliptical language that gets used.

Someone you disagree with is compared to the worst figures of history. Someone you agree with is likened unto the Messiah himself and wrapped in flags and supported with rapturous blindness to whether every single idea is good and every policy is wise and every word should be taken as gospel. We polarize.

We drive each other to extremes and it feeds on itself. It is a little fire. It just takes a match.

It hits the tinder. And next thing you know, there is a conflagration that is harmful, damaging, wounding. So all of us, everyone, mature, immature, old, young, wise, foolish, early in the faith, long in the faith, everyone should cultivate these qualities.

There is no condition. There's no limitation. There's no exclusion.

Everyone, when it says every man, this is man in the classic sense of every human being, should be swift to hear. If someone else is speaking, that's a great opportunity to listen. Listen.

Slow to speak. And notice that when conversations go wrong, what is the result? What are the three things in this exhortation? There is speaking, there is listening, and there is anger. Because conversation, if it goes wrong, stirs up anger.

Remember our Old Testament maxim, a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. Anger is the hazard. Anger is the difficulty.

But the three elements you have here, and you see them linked elsewhere in scripture, as we have noted, are speaking and listening and the possibility for anger. This is why it is so important to be on our guard. And the reason is when anger enters into the relationship, into the back and forth, into the communication, into the conversation, it is the wrath of man.

And in verse 20, the wrath of man does not produce, does not bring about, does not lead to or engender the righteousness of God. This is the third time we have a kind of birth in this context.

Our desires, when they conceive, they bring forth sin.

Sin grows up to become death. God birthed us, brought us into being by the word of truth. In our conversations, if we let anger creep in and let it grow, it does not produce the righteousness of God.

Our lives are to be a place of first fruits. And those fruits are righteousness. The righteousness of God should be produced in us.

When Jesus said in John, I am the vine, you are the branches, abide in me and bear fruit. This is the fruit of righteousness. So what is the nature of the wisdom from God? Because many times issues that arise and lead to conversation or lead to debate or lead to sharing and expressing opinions and points of view, large and small, require wisdom.

What is best in this situation? What reflects prudence? What reflects good stewardship? What reflects God's glory in this world? So we go to God and we ask for wisdom as we have already been exhorted to do. And so it comes to us or is suggested to us, hopefully we are speaking the truth to one another in love. And that truth shines as a beacon.

It lights our path. God's word is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. We hide it in our hearts so that we don't sin in our relationships or in our actions, our thoughts, our policies, goals, values, priorities.

The word of God shines light and the fruit of our life is righteousness. So we need this wisdom. We know that we can go to God and ask nothing doubting.

He will give freely and without rebuke, without reproach. But we've got to be certain. We have to be sure when we ask.

So we ask, and here is a suggested solution, an answer, a way forward, a piece of what appears to be wisdom. How do I know that's from God? I suspect myself of justifying what I want as the wisdom of God. So how do I know? Thankfully and helpfully, James returns to this subject a bit later on in the book.

So look at chapter three, flip forward a page to chapter three, verse 13. We ask God for wisdom. We want to be wise and we want to understand his wisdom.

We want to see its point and its purpose and its implementation, its application. I want this to wind up and go because it is God's wisdom. Who is wise and understanding among you? If we have asked and received God's wisdom, it is going to reflect in good conduct.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the humility of wisdom. Humility. It takes humility to be slow to speak and quick to hear, doesn't it? We have to assume that someone else's view, someone else's conversation, content is worth listening to.

And at this point, it is better to listen than to speak. We must have humility, self-control and humility are two sides of the same coin. You can't have self-control without humility.

You cannot have humility without self-control. They are twin brothers, twin sisters. So if we are going to be wise and understanding, if the wisdom we have requested comes to us, what will it require of us? Humility.

This will be a way that doesn't put me first, that doesn't prioritize me, myself and I. And my conduct will be good. Let your light so shine before men, Jesus said, that they see your good works and they glorify God when they see the fruit of your life. Abide in me, bear that fruit.

Let him show, this is visible to bystanders. Let him demonstrate, let him evidence, let him make it visible, show by good conduct that his works are done in the humility of wisdom. The requested wisdom from God will always require us to apply and to move forward in humility.

Humility. But, verse 14, if you have bitter envy, you may not have pity. This translates a Hebrew word and Kanaa.

And Kanaa is very closely related to Abel's brother Cain, K-A-N-A. And what was Cain's sin? He envied the acceptance of his brother's sacrifice, Q-A-N-A-H, very important. I'm stressing these because this is going to help us straighten out some, a couple of tough stretches here in James.

So what you have here is swift to hear, slow to speak, watch out for anger. The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Being angry is not going to reflect the fruit of the spirit.

It isn't going to move us forward. It isn't going to bless others. So we look at this wisdom that does produce the righteousness of God, that does reflect the fruit of the spirit.

Who is wise in understanding? Show in your good conduct, works done in the humility of wisdom. So this wisdom we are looking for is first of all, humble and is not characterized by bitter envy, by a bitter attitude toward someone else. Jealousy is another word for this and it is translated jealous, kana in the Old Testament is often translated when God says, I am a jealous God.

I have an interest that I don't want others to take away from me. I have a policy. I have a plan and others interfering with it.

Our God is a jealous God. Jealousy or a strong desire that things be a certain way can be good, can be evil. It depends on the context.

But if you have bitter envy, envy that is characterized by bitterness, by very acrid or acrimonious discord and disagreement, bitter envy and self-seeking. I want what I want. It's my way or the highway.

My right meter tells me this is right and I'm not listening to anything to the contrary. This is one

of the reasons we have to be swift to listen, to take input, to see if there is objective truth from God that will correct our sense of what is right or what is wrong because the heart is deceitful. You can't trust it when it says, well, this is right.

I know this is right. And if you don't agree that this is right, there's something wrong with you. We have to have that humility that comes with God's wisdom.

So if there is bitter envy or self-seeking in your heart, now how do we know if it's bitterness, envy or self-seeking in our heart? The heart's not going to tell us. The heart likes it. The heart, it's characteristic of our heart.

Our heart says, oh, very satisfying. I've been, this has been suppressed and somebody has lanced the boil and out this can finally come. I feel so much better.

Bitter envy, self-seeking in our hearts. Do not boast. What is boasting? This is self-defense.

This is self-justification. This is letting everyone know just how right we are. Do not boast because in so doing we lie against the truth.

We are not a source of truth. Truth does not reside in our hearts, except as it is engrafted and implanted by the word of God. The word of truth that gave us birth has to give birth to humility, to love and joy and peace and patience in our hearts.

If it is not characterized by the fruit of the spirit, and of course I'm quoting Galatians, you know, the fruit of the spirit, we will end up boasting. This is self-talk and we will end up betraying the truth, lying against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above.

How helpful is this? If these are the consequences, if this is the outcome, if this is the detritus that is produced in my soul, I know this is not God's wisdom. And I have got to stop. I have got to pray.

I've got to confess. I've got to get down on my knees, recover my humility, be swift to hear, slow to speak and get back where I'm supposed to be. I don't want to lie against the truth.

The truth is what gave us birth. This wisdom does not descend from above. It is earthy.

It appeals to the senses. It makes me feel good or better. It makes me feel vindicated or justified.

It operates by attaching itself to and gratifying my feelings. One of the best principles I was ever taught in my teenage years by a faithful teaching pastor is emotions can't think. Emotions do not reason.

They are a response. They are impulsive. They are reactive.

They don't gather evidence. They don't assess arguments. They don't apply reason.

You can feel almost any way at any time for any reason, and it does not necessarily comport with what is best, what is reasonable, what is logical. The application of the word of truth is always reasonable. Come, let us reason together.

Let us search the scriptures to see if these things are so. We are never urged to go with how we feel. This wisdom does not descend from above.

It's sourced in the earth. It's earthy, comes from the dust from which we are made. It is sensual, and it is something that the minions of Satan will use to push us off the narrow road, away from the straight gate, out of the light, out of the illuminated path of God's truth.

Demons love for us to become unthinking and impulsive. They will use that to split, to divide, to disunify, to deflect, to neutralize, and to cause us to betray the very truth that birthed us. Where envy, this is our word again, Thanos, P-H-T-H-O-N-O-S, where there is envy and self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Now the situation is unclear. Now the goals and values and priorities are difficult to see. There's mud in the water.

There's turmoil and fog in the air. There's dust and gum wrappers kicked up, blocking our view. There's a sandstorm and we can't see the way we need to go.

There is confusion and this leads to evil. Notice confusion is the inability to think. Clarity is not confusion.

Emotions can often confuse us. Emotion attacked the Lord Jesus at Gethsemane. This is a horrific cup being handed to the Lord Jesus to drink.

Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me. Jesus knew the reason for which he came into the world. He knew that he came to be the Passover lamb.

He knew that he came to be the redeemer and the sacrifice for sins, to redeem his people, Israel, and through them the entire world. Those who will receive the gift in faith, but in his humanity, it was such an imposing prospect to drink this cup. And Jesus expressed his sorrow and his concern about this impending cup, but he thought his way through it.

He applied the word of God through it. Not my will, but thine be done. Sometimes Jesus is portrayed as being highly emotional in this moment, in this phase of accomplishing our salvation.

Scripturally, it is just the opposite. Jesus overcame, subjugated, and subdued his human emotions by thinking and praying the word of God to the heavenly father. And he mastered his emotions and he subdued his natural human impulses of self-preservation and the avoidance of pain and suffering out of love, humility, acceding to and subordinating himself to the father's will.

This is a thought process. Jesus did not emote his way through passion week. He applied his way through.

So this wisdom, here's what it is not. The kind of wisdom that is impulsive, has its eyes on people, envy, jealousy. I'm right, you're wrong.

Self-defense, self-justification. This is a lie against the truth. We are not representing the truth that birthed us.

We love to be children that reflect the best of our parents. They chip off the old block, like father, like son. Wonderful characteristics, just like her mother.

The best is what we hope to reflect. And if we are birthed in truth, we should be children of truth. We should be reflections of truth, not its opposite.

Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But, verse 17, this is where we'll pick up after the break. Here is the description of God's wisdom.

How do you know the path that looks like it ought to be followed? Door number two, instead of door number one, or door number three to be chosen. How do we know this is the one that reflects God's wisdom? He's gonna tell us in verse 17. That's where we'll see the answer when we come back from the break.