

James 25-07-13b

We're ready to pick up our study here, and it is so practical because what we are looking for is the answer to our prayer, the wisdom from God that guides us, that lets us produce that fruit of righteousness, that reflects the word of truth, that birthed us, that defines us. When the Lord Jesus was talking to Pilate during the lead up to the crucifixion, and He said, for this cause came I into the world. This is the reason I was born, to bear witness to the truth.

Bear witness to the truth. He has gone to glory. We are here as His body, and we should bear witness to the truth.

That's our defining purpose. Is to be children of truth, those who reflect, practice, speak, and emanate God's truth. And this is going to come through the wisdom of God that we request when we're under pressure, when we are tested, when we are tempted, when our nature wants to push God and our relationship with Him out of the picture and take over.

It's as old as Satan and the five I-wills. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the Most High.

I will take control and take charge. I will dictate the future course of events. So the wrath of man, letting anger seep into our relationships, into our conversations, does not produce the righteousness of God, doesn't bring it forth.

So what is the nature of this wisdom that we request and that God provides? We are seeing it here in chapter three. It is not characterized by bitterness and envy. And one of several words for this envy is going to occur here in James.

And we'll have to straighten it out when we get to chapter four, verse five. And I believe this word occurs more often than what our accepted text reflects. But I'm not as interested in the word at this point as in the concept.

Can we recognize subjectivity creeping into our views and our attitudes and hence into our conversations and our interactions, where we want to take charge, we want to be heard, we want to be the ones to determine what the wise course is. If there is in verse 16 of James chapter three, envy and self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing will follow. The wisdom that is from above is first pure.

The wisdom from above is first pure. Remember in the pastoral epistles when we were looking at purity, that we need to have a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. That is what we see reflected here.

There is a purity that is sourced in our heart and is reflected in our actions. So whatever wisdom comes from God, it is not going to have an admixture. It isn't going to be compromised.

It isn't going to be polluted or defiled or mixed with the kind of compromise and pollution that

so often characterizes human activity. You hear politicians interviewed and they will shade and skew and color by omission the truth. And they will say some things and leave other things out.

That's not pure. And it often does not come even from pure motives. This is a desire to conceal.

It is a desire to influence and to move things in a certain direction that really isn't healthy. And that should not be us. So this idea of purity, if you look at verse 8 of chapter 4, just further down the page, when we submit to God in verse 7, this is humility.

We resist the devil so that he flees from us. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Where have we seen this double-minded, this Daisuke idea? That was back in the earlier part of chapter 1. If you remember, a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, isn't getting the wisdom from God. So what is the answer if we have gone down that road? The wisdom from God is going to be pure. And so we have to draw near to God and purify our hearts.

What does it say in Hebrews? We draw near, our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience, from a faulty notion of what is right and what is wrong. That sprinkling is the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Christ. We go back to our salvation.

We go back to confession. 1 John 1.7, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship. And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness, purity of heart. So when we request this wisdom from God, we are under pressure. There is a situation.

There is a hardship. We are tempted to have an evil conscience. We are tempted to make an issue out of people.

And envy stands in for all kinds of mental attitudes, sins. They are doing a thing. They are thinking a thing.

They are producing a thing. They are accomplishing a thing. I want to be where they are.

I want to be the one determining and dictating. This is envy. And there are several words that refer to it.

The wisdom that comes from above, that is the answer to the prayer of the faithful man, is, first of all, pure, not polluted. So you have this described in James 4.8. You have this in Matthew 5.8. I say Matthew 5, you think Sermon on the Mount, first chapter, 5, 6, and 7. 5.8, that is probably in the Beatitudes, those early verses. And sure enough, Matthew 5.8, blessed are the pure in heart.

Why? They shall see God. Seeing God is understanding His wisdom, His wisdom illuminating

our hearts. We see God and we see God's purpose and God's path.

We understand in humility that God's way is a way of self-sacrifice, of putting aside those things that pollute and defile. Blessed are the pure in heart. The wisdom from God is pure.

Whatever solution suggests itself, presents itself, comes to be an option for us, is it pure? Philippians 4.8, we've memorized this. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think on these things. Right in the middle of that list of what we should think on that reflects virtue and praise, that's what should occupy our minds.

The wisdom that is from above is first pure. If there's some path that involves anything other than purity, that's not the wisdom that comes from above. It is going to somehow be subjective, either eyes on self, eyes on people, or trying to use human elbows and knees and human tools and human solutions, human energy, the works of the flesh to solve a problem, to accomplish a goal.

It's got to be first pure. Remember Titus 1.15, we recently covered Titus, to the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, you can't ask in faith, nothing doubting when you're unbelieving, and then you're not going to see the pure path. To the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure.

Their mind and their conscience are defiled. Before we start trying to solve a problem or pursue a way forward or seek after a goal, we have to look to ourselves and ensure that we have claimed the grace of God for cleansing and purity, be centered in purity, no unconfessed sin, no unresolved evil desires. Purity, the wisdom that is from above, thrives, operates, and reflects an environment of purity.

Of course, 1 John 3.3, the hope that is in Christ, the motivation in the triad of Christian virtues, everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he, the Lord, is pure. Our purity reflects the Lord's purity, 1 John 3.3. Secondly, this wisdom from God is peaceable, peaceable. Remember in verse 18, the next verse, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace, sown in peace by those who make peace.

It doesn't result in conflict, strife, division. This righteous fruit is sown in peace and those who sow it are peacemakers. Once again, you go to Matthew 5, blessed are the peacemakers.

And this is to reject friendship with the world, because friendship with the world disrupts our peace with God. James 4.4, do you not know? Friendship with the world is enmityship, enmity with God. Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world, go along to get along, pacify, cajole, influence, try to cultivate, try to impress.

James is going to have a lot to say about partiality to the influential, showing them favor, hoping to receive favor. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever wants to be a

friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

That is not a reflection of peace. You have over and over again, Romans 12, verse 18, if it is possible, as much as it depends on you, to the extent that you can accomplish it, live peaceably with everyone. Pursue peace.

Hebrews 12, verse 11, the discipline from God, the chastisement from the Lord, no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful. Nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it, who respond to the correction. Sometimes correction doesn't make a dent in our willfulness or our stubborn pursuit of what our right meter says is best.

But if we are trained by God's correction, happy is the man whom God correcteth, it says over in Job. Chastening isn't fun. It's often painful, but afterward, peaceable fruit.

It heals, it binds up, it restores unity. It takes away division and rancor to those who are trained by it. It makes a difference.

So the wisdom from God is pure, then peaceable, gentle. This goes to the expressions of love you find in 1 Corinthians 13, verses four through seven. Love that suffers long and is kind, doesn't envy, doesn't parade itself, isn't puffed up, doesn't behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

The truth that birthed us, the truth that should define us and be reflected in our conduct, our speech, our behavior, rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. This is gentleness. 2 Corinthians 10, verse one.

I, Paul, myself, am pleading with you, Corinthians, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. I plead with you and I invoke the gentleness of Christ. Galatians that I quoted earlier, 5.22 and 23, the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control.

Ephesians chapter five, verse nine, the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, gentleness. Philippians chapter four, verse five, circle this one, Philippians four, five. Remember Philippians chapter two, let this mind be in you.

Philippians chapter four, verse five, let your gentleness be known to all men, your gentleness, your moderation, the softness of your answers that turns away wrath. 1 Thessalonians chapter two, verse seven, we were gentle among you just as a nursing mother cherishes her children, gentleness. 1 Timothy chapter three, verse three, remember chapter three is the characteristics of good leaders, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, not greedy, not grasping, gentle, right in the middle of that, not given to excess, not given to wine, violence.

2 Timothy chapter two, verse 24, can circle this one, 2 Timothy 2, 24, a servant of the Lord must

not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, able to present truth in a non-harsh, non-confrontational way. There is a time to face down, especially for pastors and teachers, there is a time to rebuke and correct and instruct from the pulpit, but a servant of the Lord, peaceable, gentle, not quarrelsome, patient. Titus chapter three, verse two, speak evil of no one, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

Humility and gentleness, peaceableness are intertwined, as you can see. 1 Peter chapter two, verse 18, when Peter is talking to slaves, and he says, servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle masters, but also to the harsh. Even when we are treated harshly, we respond with humility, willing to yield, willing to yield.

This is in the King James translated, easy. This reflects the way of the Lord. This is non-confrontational.

It doesn't mean we yield in morals, yield in principles, yield in ethics, yield to evil, to be doormats and be run over. We are willing to yield in the sense that we will let the conflict pass. If someone is intractable, if they are unconvincible, if they are devoted to an opinion or a policy that is contrary, let it go, disinvest.

We have other principles that guide us. We don't cooperate. We don't become you know, accessories after the fact, and by passivity become complicit.

But to avoid strife and division, if somebody is going to have a say, let them have their say, and don't feel that we have to counter every point, we don't have to win every debate, we don't have to crush the opponent with the force of our logic. Willing to yield means in a conversation, if somebody is really intractably down a bad road, let it go. If you receive an insult, you don't have to return one.

So, yield the floor, yield the moment, move on to something else, be flexible, be humble, be patient, be loving, avoid to the extent that it is up to us, the harshness and the division. We saw that verse earlier. If possible, to the extent that it is up to us, be peaceable.

And sometimes to keep the peace, you've made your point, that's fine. We'll agree to disagree. I'm going to exit stage left rather than continue to argue, debate, try to force you with a headlock to understand my point of view.

I yield this argument. You've said your piece. Good enough.

Willing to yield. We have to understand what this yield idea is. It isn't compromise with evil.

It isn't cooperation with sin or bad attitude, bad policy. But we endeavor to defuse with a soft answer whatever wrath is coming into the picture. Willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits.

The wisdom that comes from God gives us humility, gives us self-control, everything in the list of the fruit of the Spirit. And we are merciful. Again, back to the Beatitudes.

And I think this James, this Yaakov, writing this letter, I think he was a first-person audience member sitting very near the Lord when he delivered the Beatitudes. Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy. This is the wisdom that came from the lips of the Lord Jesus.

Be full of mercy. Be full of good fruits, the fruit of the Spirit. Full of mercy.

In Luke 6.36, a corollary, a parallel, Jesus said, therefore, be merciful just as your Father also is merciful. John 1.14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and good and truth. He is merciful.

The full of good fruits, 2 Corinthians 9.10, may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. Good fruits, righteous fruits. Philippians 1.11, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

That's why we're here, to be full of good fruits, to produce good fruits. Colossians 1.10, that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. The wisdom that comes from God, producing this fruit of righteousness, returns to us and we increase in the knowledge of God and become more and more conformed to the image of his Son.

Many, many verses that reflect these principles. They are so central. The fruit is without partiality and without hypocrisy.

That goes back to James 1.6, ask in faith, nothing doubting. Don't be driven like a wave of the sea tossed by the wind. Without hypocrisy.

Romans 12.9, let your love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. 2 Corinthians 6.6, by purity, by knowledge, the wisdom of God, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by unhy pocritical love, sincere love.

This is how we fulfill the wisdom of God. 1 Peter 1.22, since you have purified your souls, back to that purity, we've got to deal with sin in our own lives and deal with the board, the beam that is in our eye before we try to fix anything else. Because you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.

You have purified your souls, love one another with a pure heart. Pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith. We saw it in Timothy.

So critical for us. This is what characterizes the wisdom from God. So when we are tested, when we are tempted, and we ask of God, nothing doubting, and wisdom comes, this is how we'll recognize it.

This is how we will know it. It will not be characterized by the earthly, the sensual, the demonic.

If there is envy, if there is self-seeking, it is not from God.

This is what characterizes the wisdom of God. So I find this to be very helpful because I can put on the chalkboard the various options. If we go down this road, does it reflect humility? Does it reflect righteousness? Is it peaceful and making for peace? What will be the outcome? What will be the effects and the after-effects if I pursue this particular course? Is it truly wisdom from God? How do I know? It doesn't get any better than this.

This is the description of the answers that come from God, the guidance on where to put our feet, what path to follow, how to treat one another, how to speak in conversation. If there's anger, if it's going to spark anger, if it is going to result in unyielding conflict, yield the floor, pursue peace. To the extent that it is up to us, live peaceably, not in conflict.

Back to our passage in verse 20 of chapter 1, the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. So many of these bad elements have anger, dissatisfaction with others, dissatisfaction with circumstances, unhappiness with the flow of events, which are manifestations of anger, the wrath of man, the dissatisfaction I feel I'm going to fix. The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

So what should we do to make sure this doesn't happen? Verse 21, therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness. Whatever corrupts, whatever defiles, whatever drags us into the world, whatever smacks of worldly wisdom, earthly counsel, this is what any unbeliever could do in this situation, lay it aside. That which defiles, filthiness is what defiles, what disqualifies from approach, what wrecks our communion with God, our access to God and what He has provided to us, to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, to be enabled and empowered to do God's will, to bear the fruit of righteousness.

Filthiness destroys that, so lay it aside. And the overflow of wickedness. There's wickedness in other places, but it is spilling over into our lives.

It's the surplus. David says in Psalm 23, my cup overflows, my cup runs over. This is the opposite of that.

This is an overflow of wickedness. It's coming from others. Don't let the wickedness in other places spill into the heart that needs to be pure, the conscience that needs to be good, the faith that needs to be uncompromising.

Lay it aside, filthiness, whatever the overflow of wickedness is. Wickedness is trying to enter. It's seeping through the cracks.

It's coming in my direction. Lay it aside and receive with humility the implanted word, the engrafted word. Let it sink into the soil.

Think of the parable of the soils. Don't let any of those hazards choke the word, reject the word, prevent the word from sinking in deep so that it avoids the heat of the sun. Receive with

humility the implanted word, which is able to deliver your soul.

Deliver it from what? It says save your souls. Is this from the lake of fire? This is from failure. This is from sin, wickedness, unfruitfulness, death, death of relationships, death of opportunities, death of potential, death of future service and function in the kingdoms to come, laying up treasure in heaven, reflecting the glory, representing the Lord Jesus in this life.

All of that goes away unless we can receive with humility the implanted word. It doesn't just hear and sit on the surface. It doesn't appear.

It isn't scattered and sits on the surface to be carried away by the birds, blown away by the wind. It sinks in. It is grafted.

It is implanted. It delivers our souls because it sinks in. God honors His word.

God magnifies His word above His name. And when we are characterized, when it is planted and growing within us, we are blessed. We are acceptable.

But, verse 22, and this is where we pick up next time, it isn't enough to hear it. We have to apply it. When you see doers of the word, this is applies.

We turn the corner from observation and interpretation, which is hearing, receiving, to doing. We hear it. We let it sink in deep.

Let patience have its perfect work. Let the word of God germinate, grow, produce life and fruit in our soul. Be a doer.

When the wisdom of God comes and we identify it by these easy-to-spot characteristics, it is the path of humility, and so on, now do it. We can see the right path, and our pride trips us. Our intransigent need to win the argument trips us.

Our envy, our bad attitudes prevent us. Even when we know to do what is right, an impulse, something trips us up, something diverts us, and the wisdom that ought to characterize us is instead replaced with something that is earthy, something that appeals to our senses, our emotions, our impulses, and something that is used by the minions of Satan, the demonic element comes in. The demons, the fallen angels, the leader of the fallen angels, Satan, characterized by the sin of pride, I will take charge.

I will decide what is best. I will vindicate and justify myself. So we have to be hearers of the word, allow it to sink in, receive with humility, teachability.

Humility is sometimes defined as teachability. What is it to be teachable? Be swift to listen and slow to speak. To receive the word, we have to go back to verse 19.

Swift to hear, slow to speak, and don't get angry. I can't tell you across the years the number of churches, the number of sermons, the number of Bible classes and lessons, and upon

emerging with a group, someone says, that pastor, that teacher, he was preaching at me. He knows exactly what's going on in my life, and he's trying to beat me over the head with the word of God, when the pastor and teacher had no clue, wasn't anywhere in their mind.

It is the word that the Holy Spirit uses like a fire and like a hammer to break rocks in pieces. And we have to not react with anger and try to shoot the messenger. Swift to hear, slow to speak, don't have an emotional defensive response, let the word sink in.

The engrafted word, the implanted word does the work. And this is a wonderful blessing from God that we do not have to generate self-control from whole cloth. We don't have to find ways to accomplish the will of God in our own strength.

We don't have to strain and push to bear this fruit. Receive with humility the engrafted word, it produces the fruit. All we have to do is maintain our humility, put away and lay aside wrath, filthiness, the overflow of wickedness, knowing that the word will save our souls.

We don't have to save our own soul. God's word will do it. In this sense, having received it, it's kind of like let patience have its perfect work.

We cultivate the patience, and patience will make us perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Earlier in the chapter, but we've got to do it, not just hear it. That's where we'll pick up next time.

But what a wonderful thing to see this description of who to meet at the airport. You're going to go pick someone up you've never met before. They don't have a picture handy, so they give you a description.

When you see them, this is what they'll be wearing. This is what their hair and their face, this is their build. When you see somebody that looks like this, that's the person.

That's the one to go find and introduce yourself. This is the description of God's wisdom. And when we ask for it in a specific situation that challenges us, here's the physical description.

This is what to watch for. When this comes, that's it. Embrace it with humility.

Put aside wrath, anger, malice, clamor, division, envy. Receive it. Embrace it.

It'll deliver your soul. What a great promise. What a straightforward procedure for handling difficulties that God allows through the wall of fire and into our periphery.

We'll pick up here at what it means to be a doer and not a hearer only next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your wonderful promises, your patience with us, the grace that you express. We are made of dust, we are fallen, we so easily fail, but your grace is sufficient for every need.

Your strength is made manifest in our weakness when we turn to you, when we confess our

sins, when we rely in faith on your promise to grant us the wisdom we need to navigate each and every day. We pray that as we reflect on these passages, God the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts. May the engrafted word be the deliverance for our souls in the hours and days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.