

James 26-09-09a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday night at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 9th of September 9 9 2026. We continue our study in the book of Jacob, popularly known as James.

We are in chapter 4. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study. We'll dive right in. Father, what a wonderful privilege it is to have free access to your word, to be able to enrich our souls as we delve into its truth, to have your Holy Spirit with us, to seal us in your eternal family, to mark us as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ, to lead us into all truth.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will find us ready pupils, that it will meet a need that enables us by being filled and being enabled and being strengthened and guided, will allow us to represent the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth as members of his body, as those who reflect his glory and ultimately your glory, so that in all things the Lord Jesus is glorified and your plans and purposes are accomplished in and through us. We pray that our study tonight will contribute to that and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Looking at our passage, I want to go back a little bit to chapter 3 because as you may know, the context, the flow of thought in a passage is all important to understanding it and understanding is essential to putting it into practice, having it change the way we think, the way we talk, the way we act, the way we live. So we're going to back up just a little bit. In chapter 3, we saw the tongue being afire in verse 6, how important it is for it to be consistent in verses 11 and 12.

Then in verse 13 of chapter 3, James asks, who is wise and understanding among you? We want to be able to stick up our hand and say, me, I am wise. I've spent a fair amount of time in a church of faithful believers who love the Lord, want to walk in His ways and experience His grace, exploit His salvation and prepare for an eternal future with Him. I want to be wise.

I want to be understanding. That's the reason I find God's truth. I regularly expose my mind and my soul to it.

I pray over it and I try to live it out day by day. That is the way to be wise and understanding. And we ask, if we lack wisdom, chapter 1, so who is wise and understanding among you? You want to say, well, I qualify.

Anybody can do it. I have made the choice. I choose to be wise.

I choose to be understanding. We're not necessarily born with it. We're not necessarily naturally inclined toward it.

But in the supernatural life that you and I lead as children of God and body of Christ, any one of us can qualify to be wise and understanding. So the question is, if we are, then what? This is James' question. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct his

works in the humility of wisdom.

It's amazing how humility permeates the Christian virtues. Love is not puffed up. Love does not seek its own.

Love is humble. The fruit of the spirit includes humility. Faith requires humility.

I will trust God. I will claim his promises because I know that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. So if I detect, and I should be looking at myself from time to time, if I detect that there is a lack of humility, if I start sticking my elbows out and saying, well, I'm all that and a plate of cookies, we need to cultivate humility.

What is the best way to remain humble? Just look at ourselves, our propensity for sin, for failure, our carnal nature, our need. The thing that distinguishes believers, hear me on this, if nothing else lasts in our memory from tonight, this point should. It is so easy to be deceived.

Humility is teachability. God's grace comes to those who are humble. And humility, if you want to define it, is recognition of our need.

If we are sufficient, I've got this. This is a popular thing. People for the last 20 or 30 years, you watch a movie or something, and they're trying to portray someone who is heroic or is going to be the protagonist of the story.

And in a difficult circumstance, they say, I've got this. We don't have this. Apart from Christ, we don't have anything.

We are hopeless, helpless, and useless apart from the grace of God and the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we dwell, through whom we have been saved. What do we have that we did not receive? We are all as an unclean thing. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

We fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away. Without God, without Christ, and without His grace, we are nothing. If that doesn't make us humble, we are in deep trouble.

We recognize our need. How is that need met? It is met by God's provision through the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence and power of the Spirit. The Trinity comes, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and they meet our need.

It is expressed in the Word of God. We wouldn't have a first clue without the Word of God that explains and elaborates and communicates this essential truth. Who is wise and understanding among you? If we are wise and understanding, one of the things we understand is, in Christ, we are a new creation.

Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. If we do not have the Son, we do not have life. We need Him.

There is a ministry that is linked on many Christian websites, including the one that I maintain. For those who have questions or who are interested in relationship with Christ, the name of the ministry is Need Him. It's the phone number.

Need Him. That is a wonderful name for a gospel-communicating ministry, giving the essentials of entering into God's salvation. We need Him.

Without Him, we are nothing. We can do nothing. We can achieve nothing.

We have nothing to look forward to. Our faith and our hope and our love all derive from the Lord Jesus. So, I'm back to chapter 3. Who is wise and understanding among you? If we are wise and understanding, we first of all recognize our need.

That is the essential component of humility. If I'm humble, I acknowledge that I need help. If I'm humble, I acknowledge that I can make mistakes.

If I'm humble, I recognize my failures. In humility, I go before the throne to request grace to help in time of need. You recognize that from Hebrews chapter 10.

So, if we are indeed wise and understanding, it should show. I like to think that I'm wise and understanding. Most people like to think that we've got a few pieces of experience and hard-earned wisdom, things that we've learned from the Word of God, things that we've acquired in the school of hard knocks.

But if that is really true, then it should be evident. Let Him show, James says, by good conduct, His works in the meekness of wisdom. The meekness of wisdom.

If we have the wisdom of God, we are not going to be puffed up. Notice, when you think of the three components of Christian virtue, faith, hope, and love, love, as we have come to understand it in our studies, is the measure of how well we're doing in faith and in hope. Can I look at this past day? We're in the evening now.

We spent a Wednesday, all of us, doing things. Were there expressions of love? Love is sacrificial to self, beneficial to others, and is, in the life of a believer, always sourced in and reflective of God's love. Lots of people love.

Unbelievers get married, love each other for a lifetime, love their kids. The kids love their parents. They love their cousins.

They love their aunts and uncles and their grandparents and their grandkids. I love everything from pizza to people. And that is an emotion.

It is an attachment. It is a type of loyalty. But the only love that counts, the only love that perpetuates, that partakes of eternity, that builds treasure in heaven, and that reflects the glory of

God, is the love that we receive and reflect from God.

Love that glorifies God. Love that is expressed because of our relationship with the Father through Christ in the presence and power of the Spirit. That's the love that counts.

You can look at great swaths of unbelieving people and do they love? Of course. Does it count? In the great sweep of history and in the judgment to come and in the prospects for the eternal future, does it count? There's only one kind of love that counts. That is love that is sourced in God, is flowing through our souls, and in its expression glorifies God.

That love counts. Other love, the grass withers, the flower fades. It may be wonderful, beautiful, smell good, but it fades.

It is only the Word of our God that stands forever. God is love. We love because He first loved us, and the love of God compels us.

So, if we are going to be genuinely wise and understanding, we show by good conduct. It works itself out in what we do. Contact with others is the necessary component of love.

You can't love in the abstract. Putting a bumper sticker on your car in support of somebody on the other side of the world is not love. Love operates in the first person.

We have studied this concept in the epistles in recent years. We know that there are differences in expression of love depending on the sphere in which the object of that love dwells. There is one another love, highly specific.

This is reciprocal. The target of this love, the object of this love, is someone who can love back, who has a relationship with God similar to our own, understands what love is and who it glorifies in its expression. We are kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, forgave us.

Is the whole world forgiven? Are rebellious and indifferent believers forgiven? No. What is the nature of the love that is expressed in forgiveness? It is in a particular sphere, a particular realm. God loved the world and sent his Son, John 3.16. Whoever believes doesn't perish, has everlasting life.

But the one another's, that's a special category and we have to be cautious because if you try to express one another love to someone who isn't another, bad things happen. There is abuse, there is support for things that are not godly and you become an enabler or an accessory after the fact. We have to be extremely careful with one another love.

This is a part of the wisdom. Who is wise and understanding among you? Show in our works, in our interaction with others, humility that characterizes God's wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

Where is the boasting and lying against the truth to be found in this situation that James describes? The boast is, I'm wise and understanding. I'm a believer who understands the will and the work and the word of God. I've got it figured out.

I've got notes. I've been to Bible class. My Bible is marked up.

I've been listening for years. I've got the inside track. I'm wise.

I'm understanding. If humility isn't there, and believe me, you can sense this if you have ever been in sort of a search for a church. Maybe you moved to a new community and you're looking for a church and you begin to sense that there is a group that believe they've got it all figured out.

It can be vocabulary. It can be theology. It can be the programs and the outreaches and the ministries.

Look at our church. Look at all the money we spend. Look at the things we do.

And the one thing it is not is humble. The one thing it does not do is recognize its own need. It is outward-looking and busy trying to identify and deal with the needs outside.

And this is the beam in the eye that Jesus described. You're trying to do moat removal for others, and you haven't dealt with your own vision first, which is far worse. So, the meekness of wisdom, if you're boasting, you're not meek.

You're not humble. And if your actions do not reflect divine wisdom, it's going to come out in bitter envy. Bitter envy is looking at others.

This is subjectivity, eyes on people. You find something wrong with people. Bitter envy.

You are in trouble. Bitter envy and self-seeking. This is subtle, and this is tricky, because in self-seeking, I feel better when I survey the problems of these other groups and these other peoples, and in these other situations, I feel better about myself.

That's self-seeking. It isn't the part of humility to sharpshoot everybody else. Humility says what? Pop quiz.

What does humility say? I have a what? Starts with N and ends with EED. I have a need. The grace of God, the wisdom of God, the presence and power of God, I need that.

This is why in chapter one, when I recognize that I lack wisdom, I have a need for wisdom, I recognize it, and I ask God for wisdom. It's a recognition of need. By definition, that person is humble.

So, the opposite of that, the alternate to that, is bitter envy and self-seeking. I end up, instead of humble, I end up boasting. Instead of gratitude and thankfulness and grace that God gives to the

humble, God is going to resist me.

We love the part that says God gives grace to the humble, but what is always tied to that? God resists the proud. If you're boasting, God is not smoothing your path. God is not guiding.

God is not leading and directing and enabling and empowering and infusing our lives with divine presence, power, and purpose. God resists the proud. I'm pretty sure, like me, you don't want God resisting you.

You know, if God be for us, who can be against us? What's the opposite of that? If God be against us, who can be for us? God resists the proud. We are looking at humility versus pride and its relationship to wisdom. If I'm going to request wisdom, God will give it liberally and without reproach.

What do I do with that wisdom? Do I say, I've got a little bit of wisdom now. Let me strut and fret my hour on the stage full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Let me impress you with my wisdom.

Wisdom that is from above has a different quality. So do not boast and do not lie against the truth. Inevitably, we will twist and distort and pervert the truth when we are prideful, arrogant and boasting and not humble and accessing that wisdom so that we can be the people God calls us to be.

I am not going to go try to push you into a calling and a slot and a course of action and an attitude and a philosophy. I need this wisdom for me so that I can operate in love and I can operate properly in love. That is what I need this wisdom for and I can only do that recognizing my need and being humble.

So do not boast and lie against the truth. If we do not have humility, we will twist, distort, pervert and corrupt the truth. We will be arrogant and any truth that is in our periphery is going to get messed up and that is tragic.

We are here to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus, to be his body on this earth. And what did Jesus say? I am the truth. How can we possibly represent him if we are lying against the truth? We are enemies of the cross and all it takes is failure to cultivate humility, failure to pursue God's wisdom.

So we need to know what this wisdom looks like and we need to know what we look like when we have that wisdom. This is pretty important, right? We cannot just go blithely tripping along and not pay attention to the primary fundamentals of our mission, of the reason God gives us breath and life, the reason he saved us and left us here. It is pretty important.

So this wisdom that is not from God, that is not the result of a request in humility, wisdom that ends up causing us to be pretty proud of ourselves and to do damage to the truth, to corrupt and

pervert and distort the truth, to not rightly divide the word of truth. What does he say? This wisdom does not descend from above. You can purport to be asking God for wisdom, but if you are getting and implementing the wisdom from God, it is going to result in personal humility, recognizing my need and seeing God meet that need, because I have asked in faith, nothing doubting.

I am no longer double-minded and unstable. Now I am single-minded and stable. We saw that in chapter one, right? So what if I think I am wise and think I have wisdom, how would I know? It is hard to spot my own arrogance, but how about my actions? If I find myself looking at others and bitterness arises, fist goes in the air, how dare they? I am ultimately boasting and lying against the truth.

This wisdom does not descend from above. This is not the answer to the valid humble man's prayer. It is three things.

It is earthly, it is sensual, and it is demonic. The word earthly is literally upon the earth. If you have ever looked at the Greek word for the there is a goddess, Gaia, and there is a whole cult of feminism that is Gaia this and Gaia that, but it stems from this root word, G-E, gay, not G-A-Y, G-E, gay.

And this is epi-gay. This wisdom is upon the earth. Epi is upon.

And epi, when you think about epinosis, gnosis, of course, is knowledge. Epinosis is experiential knowledge. It is fulsome knowledge, knowledge that has worked itself out in practice.

Well, epi-gay is working in the ways of the world. Any unbeliever can do this. My old pastor from years ago used to say, anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian way.

And if you look at that carefully, that is true. We operate in the spirit and the word, and unbelievers have no ability to do that. Epi-gay, that's earthly.

The second one here is sensual, sensual. This word is psychikos, psychikos. One of the great passages where this word occurs is in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

Please turn back there as illumination for this passage. People like to pit James and Paul against each other. You hear what James is saying, right? Take a look at 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 46.

1 Corinthians 15, 46. The spiritual is not first, but the natural. He's talking about the resurrection of the dead.

Up in verse 42, the body is sown in corruption, raised in incorruption, sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power, sown a natural body. This is psychikos. It is sown a natural body.

The word natural there is psychikos. So this wisdom that is not from above is earthly. It partakes of the ways of the world.

This is how the world gets by. This is how the world applies leverage and gets things done with kinds of pressure, with seduction, with deception, with all manner of fallen ways. So our body here is psychikos.

Our body is of nature, natural body. It is raised a spiritual body, pneumatikos. You see the word pneuma in there, just like a pneumatic tire.

It's got this spirit element. There is a natural body. That's the one that we've got right now.

And there is a spiritual body. So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, the psychikos, afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, from the ge, literally what it says there, made of dust, koikos, a dusty man. He's a dusty man, made of dust.

The second man is the Lord from heaven, as was the man of dust. This is so great when you see it in Greek. This man of dust, and notice man is in italics, as was that of dust, so also those of dust.

We're in the image of Adam. We are dusty people. As is the heavenly, man is in italics there, so are those of heaven.

And as we have borne the image, notice, you've heard me talk about whether or not all human beings have the image of God. We bear the image of dust, the one of dust. We shall bear the image of the heavenly.

Is God heavenly or earthly? If we bear the image of the heavenly, that is the image of God. We recover the image of God through salvation that was lost at the fall. That's the man of dust, and we are in the image of the man of dust.

So notice the contrast here. There is spiritual and there is natural. These same words occur in our James 3 passage.

The wisdom that is practiced by those who do not evidence love and humility are not taking God's wisdom and plowing it into their own soul. This is what we hope to do, have a kind of wisdom that does not descend from above. It is earthly.

It is psychic. It is natural. It is of the man of dust.

This is the kind of wisdom that people use to get by. God's not in it. The Spirit's not part of it.

Wisdom from above, the Word of God, the glory of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, the glory of Jesus Christ isn't in it. I'm doing things. You could swap in the average unbeliever, and the situation wouldn't look any different.

I'm not operating any differently. I'm not thinking any differently. I'm not acting any differently.

I'm not applying any different wisdom than a godless, don't-own-a-bible unbeliever. That should not be us. We are called to be different.

The wisdom of God should characterize us. The humility that is a recognition of our need, that need is exposed by the Word of God. There's a wonderful song, I Need Thee Every Hour.

Oh, precious Lord, I need Thee. Oh, I need Thee. Every hour I need Thee.

Oh, bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee. Recognition of need. Need is humility.

If you don't have it, where envy and self-seeking exist. Envy. This is where we get the word zeal, z-e-l-o-s, zealos.

I've got a program. I've got a plan. I'm invested in a strategy, in an approach, in an attitude.

I've got an agenda. This is what needs to happen. I've got it all figured out.

Zeal. Where zeal and self-seeking. This is an interesting word because it started out, this is a noun that comes from a verb.

It's eritheia is the noun, erithuo is the verb. You don't have to know that except that. Erithuo means to work as a day laborer.

This is blue collar work. Envy and I will do it myself. I'm going to get ahead.

I'm going to pull myself by my own bootstraps. I will get this done by my efforts, my strength, my design. I know what needs to be done.

I'm going to get it done. Self-seeking doesn't really capture it. It's a fascinating word.

In 2 Corinthians 12:20, Paul says, I fear that when I finally am able to come visit you believers in Corinth, I shall not find you such as I wish, and I shall be found by you such as you do not wish. We're not going to be happy with each other, lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, there's our word, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, and tumults. Notice this is 2 Corinthians.

Paul has dealt with the Corinthians. He wrote them the first letter. This is the second letter, and he's already given them 11 chapters.

And in 12:20, what characterizes those that do not have wisdom from above? We're going to see

the description in verse 17 of our passage, but look at what it's not. The wisdom of God is not contentious, jealous, bursting out with wrath, selfishly ambitious. This gets to our word.

I, in my strength, with my plan, and my energy, am going to get this thing figured out and done. Backbitings, this is carping and criticizing, and where do wars and fights come from among you? Whisperings, I'll ruin your reputation by talking behind your back. Conceits, gets back to the arrogant idea, conceited.

Tumults, more conflicts. Tumults involve groups where there can be individual conflicts. That's your backbitings and your whisperings.

Tumults, now we're recruiting and we're taking sides. We're going to end up splitting a group, splitting a family, splitting a church. So in Galatians 5 20, there is another list of bad things happening.

Idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions. This is our word. Erithea, E-R-I-T-H-E-I-A, if you want to write it down.

Galatians 5 20, dissensions and heresies. Philippians 1 17. And two, three, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, humility, let each esteem others better than himself, ahead of himself.

Love is sacrificial to self, beneficial to others. Philippians 2 3. Our passage, we already saw bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts in verse 14. Now we see it again in verse 16.

Envy and self-seeking exist. Confusion and every evil thing are there. Do you want to be confused? Do you want to sow confusion? Do you want to create confusion? Do you want to muddy the water? Do you want to lie against the truth? Do you want to be not in line for God's grace, but instead be resisted by God? God is going to disrupt progress.

He's going to change his mind about provision and protection and the rest of it. God resists the proud. It's not worth it.

What agenda do I have? What goal do I hope to achieve in my own strength, by my own wisdom that I think is better than what God has planned? Why would we do this? We blind ourselves because our hearts are deceitful. We should daily throw ourselves at the foot of God's throne and ask for wisdom. Ask for that spiritual perspective that enables us to be humble and to fully align ourselves with God's wisdom and what it dictates that we do and what we be.

It should come out in our actions. We have to look at ourselves. If we don't look at ourselves, do you really want somebody else to come in and try to criticize? We just throw up defenses.

That sows more division and dissension. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. This is a daily, mandatory operation for each one of us.

We have to come before God in prayer and take a hard look at ourselves, recognize our need, recognize how God's grace is able to fill it, throw ourselves on God's mercy, and ask for his wisdom. This is a basic Christian skill. If we don't do this, what are we doing, really? James is in the second person here.

He's talking directly. It's not, if a man, it's, if you. We've got to take this to heart.

How powerful and how beneficial is it for us when we do? Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to sail through the rest of chapter three through chapter four's beginning and into our passage for the night.