

The Bulletin

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“Wisdom From Above”

by Jefferson David Tant

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable (easy to be entreated” ASV), full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (James 3:17, NASB). Wisdom should be a much desired quality. We remember when Solomon ascended the throne following his father David, God asked what he would want. Solomon asked for wisdom rather than riches and fame. Obviously, Solomon had some wisdom to start with, but God gave him wisdom far above all others. The words “wisdom” or “wiser” are used 52 times in the New Testament, and 172 times in the Old Testament.

It is obvious that the wisdom in our text in James is a godly wisdom, for it is “from above,” and not of an earthly origin, for Paul wrote that the *“wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”* (I Corinthians 3:19). James mentions several traits that characterize true wisdom, and it would be good for us to consider these them.

Pure

We know what pure means — without contamination. When drink water, we do not want it contaminated. From time to time warnings are given that a source of drinking water has been contaminated, so people are either to boil the water to purify it, or they should not drink it at all.

There are many sources of contamination in the world in which we live, and we should strive to be sure that although we live in the world, the world does not live in us. Pornography is all around us, in movies, magazines, television and on the internet. And foul language fills the air.

There was a time when wholesome TV shows could be watched and enjoyed by the whole family. But today's standards are evidently much looser, and steamy sexual scenes and the glorification of homosexuality seems to be the standard.

Job said, *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?”* (Job 31:1). The Hebrew word for “gaze” has various applications, including “consider, be cunning, diligently, look well to...” I don't believe Job had access to the internet sites that are so prevalent today, but he had the wisdom to control his thoughts with regard to the opposite sex. David's sin with Bathsheba would not have been the chance sighting, but evidently he “gazed” at her long enough to develop lust in his heart.

Our Lord commented on this in his Sermon on the Mount: *“...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). That “woman” can be on the printed page or screen as well as in our physical presence.



We control what our mind dwells on, and thus Paul encourages us to "...not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). In our Lord's own words, we are told: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2)

Peaceable

If we are to be followers of Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace," then we should strive to apply Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." This passage allows that others may not be at peace with us, and we may not be able to control that, but we can control our own attitudes and behavior.

Is anger a natural part of our makeup? Certainly so. Is sexual desire a natural part of our makeup? Yes, again. But we understand that our emotions, although natural, are meant to be controlled. Paul had some words concerning anger in Ephesians "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. ... Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:26-31).

There are occasions to be angry. Our Lord was angry from time to time. If someone broke into my house and stole valuable things from me, I believe I would have the right to be angry. If a brother in Christ told lies about me, anger would be a natural response. But that anger must be controlled, as Paul said we should not let anger fester lest it become a sin.

One qualification for elders is "not quick-tempered" ("not soon angry"—ASV) (Titus 1:7). Some people seem to be prone to become angry at even slight provocations, and God said this is what leads to sin, and "unwholesome words" that "give the devil an opportunity." The old wise adage is still good: "Before you speak, count to ten." Our goal should be that our words "will give grace to those who hear."

If we are to be known as children of God, we need to be sure we live up to the name. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Gentle

It should be obvious that gentleness and peaceable are close kin. The Greek word carries the idea of "mild:--gentle, moderation, patient." It is clear that the word "gentleman" comes from this, and that brings up a picture of kindness and good manners. Some have suggested this connotes strength under control. In the Philippines I have seen small children riding large kerbaus. (We would call them water buffalos.) That is "strength under control."

Isaiah gives us a mental picture that fits well here. "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isaiah 40:11). Doesn't that give us a picture of "gentleness?"

Matthew Poole's Commentary has the following to say about gentle: "It implies that gentleness (as we translate it) whereby we bear with others' infirmities, forgive injuries, interpret all things for the best, recede from our own right for peace sake; and is opposed to that austerity and rigidness in our practices and censures, which will bear with nothing in weak, dissenting, or offending brethren." I couldn't have said it better.

No child is afraid to approach a gentle person. Luke tells of the people who were bringing their small children to Jesus that he might touch them. Evidently they saw that Jesus was a gentle person. (Luke 18:15-16). How gentle do others perceive us to be?

Reasonable (easy to be entreated—ASV, willing to yield--NKJV)

This should suggest that such a person can be reasoned with. Someone with whom you can have an intelligent discussion, or even a disagreement. Such a person is not stubborn or obstinate. The words "moderation" and "patient" are also included in the definition of the Greek word.

This particular word is not used in the qualifications of elders, but the other qualifying words used would certainly include this characteristic. These words would include "peaceable" (I Timothy 3:3),

"sensible" (Titus 1:8), etc. If a shepherd was a harsh, unreasonable man, would his sheep feel comfortable around him? I think not.

If Christians are to have confidence in their leaders — elders, preachers, etc. — certainly they need to feel free to approach these men, or even women who may be teachers. I have known preachers who seemed offended if anyone would dare question them. I have known elders who were always right. I have known teachers who seemingly would not consider another view. They may have been right in their understanding, but there are times when they may be in error, and thus need to be reasonable in their attitude. The opposite of that would be a spirit of arrogance. Thus others are hesitant, or even afraid, to approach them.

"The sense is, that he who is under the influence of the wisdom which is from above, is not a stiff, stern, obstinate, unyielding man. He does not take a position, and then hold it whether right or wrong; he is not a man on whom no arguments or persuasions can have any influence" (Albert Barnes New Testament Commentary). Those in positions of authority or influence must take heed that it not go to their head.

Full of Mercy (Compassion — Oracle) and Good Fruits

Where would we be without God's mercy? Truly, we would be in bad shape, and without hope, for we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). And what have we done to deserve the mercy of God? Nothing!

So...if we are to be like God, showing mercy to others should have a high priority in our lives. *"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness (mercy — KJV), And to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8). Mercy has two faces, which include acts of kindness to those who are in need, as well as acts of forgiveness to those who may have wronged us.

Those of us who live in America generally live pretty comfortable lives, yet even here there are many opportunities to show kindness and mercy to those whose lives are anything but comfort-able. And this mercy is not to be reserved just for our brethren. *"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith"* (Galatians 6:10). Obviously, we can see and examine situations here to see if the need is genuine.

But what about our brethren in other nations, in the Third World? We can ascertain situations among needy Christians there though those we trust who have travelled and worked there. We remember the Macedonians who sent relief to the Christians in need down in Judea. *"Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints"* (II Corinthians 8:1-4).

Obviously, the Christians in Macedonia made a real sacrifice to help their brethren. Paul told them they couldn't afford to send as much as they did, but they begged Paul to take it. Perhaps they were aware of Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:7: *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."* And who can forget the story of the Good Samaritan who showed mercy to one who would probably consider him to be untouchable.

And we are aware of the judgment scene Christ described in Matthew 25:31-46, where Christ says we will be judged with respect to the mercy we have given, or not given, to the sick, the hungry, the naked, etc. Do people ever get weary in doing good? Have others ever abused your generosity? If you have ever been involved in doing good to others, the answer is probably "Yes." So what do we do about that? Do we turn away and refuse to be taken advantage of again? *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary"* (Galatians 6:9)

Did anyone ever abuse Christ's kindness? From one example recorded, I would have to say that happened. I remember the time he healed ten lepers. Only one came to thank him and show appreciation. The other nine went on their merry way with not even a "Thanks."

Was Christ disappointed? The text seems to indicate that he was. *"Then Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine -- where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?'"* (Luke 17:17-18).

With respect to the forgiveness part of mercy, how can we afford to withhold forgiveness when we are totally dependent on forgiveness ourselves? We remember Peter thought he was being quite generous when he suggested forgiving seven times, and Christ upped the count to *"seventy times seven"* (Matthew 18:22).

The prayer Christ taught his disciples is very clear on this. *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions"* (Matthew 6:14-15).

The "good fruits" phrase in our text envisions a farm worker going out to the owner's orchard to gather fruit. What wages would he expect to receive if he came back in the evening with a basket only half full, or even empty? So if our "basket" is not full, how could we expect the owner of the orchard, Jesus Christ, to say *"Well done, good and faithful servant"* (Matthew 25:21)?

"How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble" (Psalm 41:1)

Unwavering, Without Hypocrisy

These two words are similar in their meaning, and carry the idea that we are to be sincere in what we do, and should not extend our mercy only to those who are our friends. James tells us: *"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism"* (James 2:1).

It is not wrong to have close friends, but close friends are not the only ones to whom we can show the kindness of Christ. Remember some of those to whom Christ showed mercy and compassion — lepers, a despised tax collector, a prostitute, a Roman centurion, a Samaritan, etc. None of these would be considered worthy to be a friend to any respectable Jew.

Let us strive to be wise with the wisdom that comes from above. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (Proverb 9:10).

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, and Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Danny Cottrell, Gary Doles, Joe Felks, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Ronnie Fowler and wife, Melissa and Star (Miss Betty's oldest daughter and granddaughter in law).

Those Who Serve:

Announcements:	Paul Busby
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Lee Busby <i>1 Peter 2:13-16</i>
Song Leader:	Jerry Kennemur
Lord's Supper:	Russell Briggs
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon:	<i>"The Heart Of A Servant"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Nathan Meade

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“The Heart Of A Servant”

Lesson Text: **1 Peter 2:13-16.**

I. Devotedly Serves God.

- Serving God is a Choice **Joshua 24:15; John 12:26.**
- Only Two Masters **Romans 6:16-18.**
- Great Contrast in the Life We Choose **Romans 6:19.**
- Cannot Serve Both **Matthew 4:8-10; Matthew 6:24.**
- Must Know His Place **John 13:16; 2 Chronicles 13:6.**
- Completely Devoted To His Master’s Will **John 6:38; John 8:44; Matthew 7:21.**
- It Is His Highest Priority In Life **John 4:31-34; Matthew 6:33.**

II. Faithfully Serves God.

- **Matthew 24:45-51; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:21 and 23.**
- Not Like: **2 Kings 5:23-27; Jonah 1:1-3; Luke 22:48; 1 Timothy 4:1-3.**

III. Zealously Serves God.

- **Ecclesiastes 9:10; Nehemiah 4:6; Romans 12:11.**
- Not Like: **Matthew 25:25-30.**

IV. Humbly Serves God.

- **Luke 17:7-10.**

V. Patiently Serves God.

- **2 Timothy 2:24; Romans 12:12.**

VI. Lovingly Serves God.

- **Galatians 5:13; Colossians 1:7-10.**

Conclusion: **1 Corinthians 15:58.**