

Intro: James, in chapter 3 of his letter sees SPIRITUAL MATURITY as being rightly in CONTROL of certain things.

(1) GIFTEDNESS is from God, but our giftedness can be misused or under-used – therefore we need CONTROL.

(2) The TONGUE is from God – by which we can praise, encourage and chart a Godly course – but it can be misused and, so it must be CONTROLLED.

(3) Likewise (today) WISDOM is from God – given to all believers who ask, believing (1:5) – and yet again, it can be misused or misnamed as Godly wisdom when it is not. It must be CONTROLLED – meaning accurately identified and understood and then properly used for God’s glory.

OUR TEXT: JAMES 3: 13-18

13 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.

This passage teaches us what Godly wisdom IS and IS not. things are as they are WISDOM is the ability to make Godly decisions. We have defined SPIRITUAL MATURITY as seeing things from God’s perspective. Therefore, the maturity that controls Godly decisions knows HOW to make decisions – seeing decisions as that which might well affect others as well as yourself, and wanting Godly “fallout” as well as Godly “results”

4 SPECIFIC SOURCES OF GODLY WISDOM

1. **Reverence** (fear of God)

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

2. **Conversion** (becoming a Christian)

1 Corinthians 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God . . .

3. **Scripture** (the Bible)

Psalm 119:98 Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine [with me] 4. **Prayer** (asking)

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously . . .

V. 13 The Call to Wisdom (we should want it!)

2 hallmarks: a) Good behavior - actions are more important than words

b) Gentleness - method is more important than the decision

V. 14 The 2 Primary Opponents to Godly Wisdom

a) JEALOUSY - wanting exclusive devotion or primary attention;
because of an unhealthy rivalry

b) BITTER AMBITION - wanting something, particularly success, for the wrong reasons

V. 15 3 Wrong Sources of Wisdom

a) ENVIRONMENT (earthly) - “wisdom” of this world

1 Corinthians 1:20 Where is the wise man? ... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

b) EGO (natural, not spiritual) - wisdom of self

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

c) ENEMY (demonic) - wisdom of Satan’s kingdom

Galatians 5:7-8 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

V. 16 The Wrong Result: Disorder (questions, unrest, wrong attitudes)

V. 17 Godly Wisdom (from above)

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|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Morally Pure (NAS: pure) | FROM A CLEAN HEART |
| 2. Accommodating (NAS: peaceable) | MAKES PEACE |
| 3. Considerate (NAS: gentle) | MAKES SMOOTH |
| 4. Reasonable (NAS: reasonable) | MAKES SENSE |
| 5. Compassionate (NAS: mercy/ good fruits) | BRINGS FORTH GOOD THINGS |
| 6. Impartial (NAS: unwavering) | SHOWS CONSISTENCY |
| 7. Authentic (NAS: w/o hypocrisy)
“Feels” right | RINGS TRUE - “Smells” and |

V. 18 The Right Result (of Godly wisdom)

a) Sows peace (generally comfortable with others)

b) Reaps righteousness (right with God)

Confidence in Trials

2-4. Take a different perspective at the many trials you face, seeing the positive in them, rather than the negative. One, your faith is being proven and strengthened. And two, you are

But is not an academic lesson, but is profoundly PRACTICAL – teaching us the “how to” in making Godly DECISIONS.

WISDOM is not the ability to understand circumstances - God may or may not reveal the “why” of why developing endurance for the long haul of life. Don’t balk at being tested, but hang in there, letting the tests accomplish their Godly purpose: your maturity, that you may be spiritually “buff” without flabbiness or weakness of character.

5. Remember, if you need wisdom (and who doesn’t?), just ask God, who gives it abundantly and without making you feel bad for asking. Just ask, and Godly wisdom will indeed be given to you.

6-8. But you have to ask really believing the answer will come. No doubting allowed! Because if you doubt, you are acting just like the waves of the sea blown around by the wind – up one minute with your belief and down the next with your doubts. This kind of supposed “faith” won’t get you anything from God. He doesn’t accept on-again, off-again faith, which by the way, indicates instability in other areas of life.

Confidence in Status

9-10. Hey, believing brother - how about this for God’s “upside down” perspective on wisdom? If your earthly status is on the “humble” side, be proud that you are standing rich and tall in God’s spiritual kingdom. And if your earthly status is on the “well off” side, be proud that in God’s kingdom you are just a spiritual beggar. After all, your earthly status is about as secure as flowering grass in the heat of the sun.

11. See the picture? Just like the sun rises, so does your status. Then comes the “Santa Annas” of life – and just like the grass withers and the flower falls, so does your status wither and fall. What once appeared beautiful is no more. Our status, and the futile pursuits of

So here is my paraphrase for Chapter 3 (preceded by chapters 1 and 2):

JAMES, Chapter 1 (My Paraphrase)

1. To my Jewish brothers of all twelve tribes, wherever you might be after having been forced out of your homeland – this letter is from James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, by calling and by choice. Dear brothers:

achieving it, will soon fade away.

12. So what’s worth achieving? - persevering through the trials of life and proving your Godly character through it all. This is how you will receive the true “crown of life” – God’s heavenly reward – which He promises to each one of His lovers.

Confidence in Temptation

13-16. I don't ever want to hear you saying, "I am being tempted by God." One, evil can never tempt a perfect God. And two, a perfect God could never lower Himself to tempt any one. Rather, it's really you that brings on temptation by your own luring lustfulness. Sin comes when you give in to temptation by acting on your lust. And when that sin gets full sway in your life it kills your relationship with God. My dear, believing friends whom I love - don't be sucked in by temptation!

17. Everything that is good is a perfect gift, especially given to you from God. "Good" is never by accident. The Giver is always our Heavenly Father, and like a bright light he never wavers or compromises in His delivery of good.

18. God exercised His Divine prerogative when He chose to pull us into truth by the power of His Word. This was so that we Jewish believers could be considered as the first ones to receive His special blessing of spiritual victory.

Confidence in Reactions

19-20. Now I'm going to tell you something you already know, but you must apply it to your reactions. One, be quick to listen to others and especially to God. Two, be slow to voice your opinion. And three, put any tendency to anger on a slow fuse. Pleasing God and getting angry never go well together. The short version: open your ears, close your mouth and chill your anger.

21. You know all that leftover filth of the old life that's still seeps out? Dump it in the spiritual trash can. You know God's Word that He has planted deep inside of you? Humbly receive its wisdom and let it save you from drowning in your own foolish reactions.

Confidence in Religion

22. It is delusional to think that you are religious by merely hearing the Word, believing it, and participating in a few religious activities. Rather, you prove and demonstrate your true religion by living out the Word actively in every area of your life.

23-24. Hearing the Word and not doing it is like looking at yourself in a mirror and not fixing what needs fixing. Why even look if you just go away unchanged and oblivious to the need?

25. God's Word is the perfect rulebook for life, with rules to set you free, not tie you down, and therefore worthy of a long and hard look. If you let them sink in, and turn your thinking into meaningful action and change, your life will surely be blessed for it.

26. Do you think that your religion is healthy? Then put it to the test by whether you can control your tongue. If you can't, not only is your religion worthless but you're deceiving yourself into thinking your religion is OK. It's not.

27. I'll tell you what real religion is about. It's about practicing love and care for those with special needs – like children without parents or women who have lost their

husbands. Bottom line, true religion is keeping yourself pure from the wickedness of the world!

JAMES, Chapter 2 (My Paraphrase)

Conviction in Equality

1. Don't you dare call yourself a believer in our amazing Lord and Chosen One, Jesus, if you treat people differently based on their appearance or background.

2-4. Here's a test. If one person walks into to your church service looking like "a million" and another comes in looking like a "bum," will you treat them the same? Or will you give special attention or seating to the one looking great and ignore the other, even making him or her sit in a place where they might not so easily draw attention. If you'd honestly treat them differently, you fail the test. You would be making an ungodly judgment based on unfair distinctions.

5-7. As my brothers in the Lord, I really do love you. So, listen up. Don't we read that God so often has chosen the poor in wealth to be rich in faith and receive His kingdom inheritance? This is exactly what God promises to all who love Him. It doesn't make sense to dishonor the poor person. More often than not, it's the rich one who will give you a hard time, even pulling you into court or using your precious Lord's name in vain.

8-9. The highest law of God's kingdom is this: "Love others as you would want to be loved." If you do this, you're right on. But if you love people differently based on externals, you're practicing sin and guilty of breaking God's #1 law.

10-11. Here's the hard fact. Even if you were to keep all of God's law perfectly, one sin (like favoritism) makes you guilty of all in God's eyes. God forbids adultery, just like he forbids murder. But if you are clean regarding adultery, yet commit murder – you're guilty of adultery, and all the other laws as well. Ouch!

12-13. Now don't be frozen with fear in your words and actions toward others – God's royal law of love is meant to motivate and free you, not condemn you. If you show no mercy, then mercy won't come your way. But if you learn to show mercy in your assessment of others, that demonstration of mercy will trump any judgment that is due you.

Conviction in Works

14. Tell me, fellow Christians, what is "saving faith?" If someone claims to be a Christian by their faith, and yet there is little visible sign of that faith in their actions, it seems to me that kind of faith is useless faith – not "saving faith."

15-16. For example, if a believing brother lacks some basic necessity such as clothing or food and you essentially tell him "blessings on you, I hope you'll be okay!" and don't make an effort to meet his need, I say your supposed faith is a sham.

17. The principle is this: Faith, if it isn't backed up by action, is dead faith.

18. Now, I can just hear someone say, “Some Christians are more private, and some are more outgoing in expressing their faith.” Well, if you’re one of those “private in your faith” types, I dare you to prove your faith without any action, while I prove my faith to others by living it out in action.

19-20. You believe that God is one? That’s good, but think of this: the demons, as they shudder, believe the same (and they’re not believers!). Can’t you admit that believing alone without actions to back it up means nothing?

21-23 After all, haven’t we heard Father Abraham was “justified by faith” when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? His faith and works “teamed up” so that his behavior proved his belief to be authentic. This was the fulfillment of the Scripture that says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Remember, this faith matched with action resulted in Abraham being called the friend of God.

24. So here’s the principle said another way: A man is made right with God by action that demonstrates inward faith, and not by action less faith.

25. Another example would be Rahab, who was once a harlot. But she too was justified, (that is, made right with God) by her works. Remember, she received and hid the spies (Joshua and Caleb) and then let them exit by a safe way.

26. To say the principle a final way: Just like a body without a spirit is lifeless, so also faith without demonstrative action is lifeless.

JAMES, Chapter 3 (My Paraphrase)

Control of Giftedness

1-2. Think long and hard about whether God has called you to be a teacher of His Holy Word. Why? First of all, God will give teachers a stricter judgment when it comes to handling His Word. Secondly, we are all sinners. (And this implies that a teacher will be rightly held to a higher standard by his students, as well.) And thirdly, teaching uses many words and therefore leads to certain stumbling. Only a perfectly controlled tongue could give a perfectly controlled teacher.

Control of Tongue

3-4 A little bit in a horse’s mouth brings its whole body to obedience. Note too that great ships can hold their course in a strong wind when directed by just a small rudder controlled by the will of the captain.

5-6 Likewise, our little tongue boasts of grandiose things. It’s like a tiny spark starting a huge, out of control forest fire. Our tongue is like a fire in many ways, a showcase for evil as it burns and ignites. Just like raging fire defiles all in its path, the tongue’s out of control wagging defiles our entire person. Like flames, our words can chart a fiery course, fueled by the very fires of hell.

7-8 Every kind of dangerous and poisonous wild animal, whether beast, bird, reptile or sea creature, can be and has been tamed to some degree. But no one can tame his tongue from danger and poison. It just won't stop wagging and making trouble.

9-10 Think of the inconsistency: out of the tongue comes both blessing of our Lord Heavenly Father and cursing of men, made in God's image. What hypocrisy that the same mouth both blesses and curses. Fellow Christians, this is plain wrong!

11-12 A fountain can't give both fresh and bitter water. Neither can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine give figs. And the ocean will never give us fresh water. Think about it!

Control of Wisdom

13 Come on, be smarter than that! Do you want to be considered wise? Then let your behavior show your wisdom and your gentle consideration of others prove your wisdom.

14-16 The two biggest opponents to Godly wisdom are bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. If these creep into your heart don't be arrogant and call them what they're not. They only bring the wisdom of this world, wisdom of your natural self and wisdom of the demons. Where you find jealousy and selfish ambition you will find disorder and evil cropping up everywhere.

17 Here are the sure signs of Godly wisdom: first and foremost, it is always uncontaminated in its morally purity. A Godly decision then fosters healthy relationships, is considerate of the implications to others, makes good sense, is accompanied by additional blessings, shows consistency and impartiality in its implementation and rings true in its authenticity. It just plain acts and feels right.

18 Long and short, if you plant seeds of consideration for God and others you will eventually reap a harvest of what is right in the eyes of God and others. Now that's how to control wisdom!