

James 3:13-18

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him demonstrate it by his good way of life, by actions done in the humility that grows out of wisdom. But if you harbor in your hearts bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, don't boast and attack the truth with lies! This wisdom is not the kind that comes down from above; on the contrary, it is worldly, unspiritual, demonic. For where there are jealousy and selfish ambition, there will be disharmony and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful, kind, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And peacemakers who sow seed in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.
Complete Jewish Bible

Devotional

Bible Footnotes James supports the truth of Old Testament wisdom literature, that wisdom is divided in two realms, man's and God's. Wise is the common Greek word for speculative knowledge and philosophy, but the Hebrews infused it with the much richer meaning of skillfully applying knowledge to the matter of practical living. The word for "understanding" is used only here in the New Testament and means a specialist or professional who could skillfully apply his expertise to practical situations. James is asking who is truly skilled in the art of living meekness. Also rendered gentleness, it is the opposite of arrogance and self-promotion. The Greeks described it as power under control. Wisdom, the kind that comes only from God. Bitter envy, the Greek term for bitter was used of undrinkable water. When combined with "envy" it defines a harsh, resentful, attitude toward others. Self-Seeking, sometimes translated "strife," it refers to selfish ambition that engenders antagonism and factionalism. The Greek word came to describe anyone who entered politics for selfish reasons and sought to achieve his agenda at any cost, even if that meant trampling on others. From above, self-centered wisdom that is consumed with personal ambition is not from God. Earthly, sensual, demonic, a description of man's wisdom as 1) limited to earth 2) characterized by humanness, frailty, an unsanctified heart, and an unredeemed spirit, and 3) generated by Satan's forces. Confusion, this is the disorder that results from the instability and chaos of human wisdom. Every evil thing, literally every worthless or vile work. This denotes things that are not so much intrinsically evil as they are simply good for nothing. Wisdom from above, pure, this refers to spiritual integrity and moral sincerity. Every genuine Christian has this kind of heart motivation. Peaceable, means "peace loving" or peace promoting. Gentle, this word is difficult to translate but most nearly means a character trait of sweet reasonableness. Such a person will submit to all kinds of mistreatment and difficulty with an attitude of kind, courteous, patient humility, without any thought of hatred or revenge. Willing to yield, the original term described someone who was teachable, compliant, easily persuaded, and who willingly submitted to military discipline or moral and legal standards. For believers, it defines obedience to God's standards. Full of mercy, the gift of showing concern for those who suffer pain and hardship and the ability to forgive quickly. Without partiality, the Greek word occurs only here in the New Testament and denotes a consistent, unwavering person who is undivided in his commitment and conviction and does not make unfair distinctions. Fruit of righteousness, Good works that result from salvation. Those who make peace, righteousness flourishes in a climate of spiritual peace.