

Title: THE WISDOM SOLUTION, JAMES 3:13 – 4:3
(Chatham, NJ; 09/20/15, AM) [Pc – Problem/Solution]

Theme: James addresses the problem of jealousy and selfish ambition by explaining what godly wisdom looks like.

Purpose: To encourage everyone to adopt the qualities of godly wisdom.

Introduction:

1. James shifts gears from his discussion about speech.
2. He sees a problem just at threatening to the health of his members: jealousy and selfish ambition.
3. Since he has already encouraged his audience to seek wisdom, now he explains what that wisdom looks like.
4. As usual, he also expresses concern for godly behavior and ties it to wisdom.

I. Problem: Disorder and Every Vile Practice, 16

- A. The source: jealousy and selfish ambition
 1. Jealousy goes all the way back to Cain, Genesis 4
 2. His anger is rooted in jealousy: Abel received approval while he didn't
 3. 1 John 3:12 implies as much
 4. Jealousy is irrational and destructive: it says, "If I can't have it, no one can."
 5. Add selfish ambition to that and you get Saul, the first king
- B. Jealousy is one step before envy
 1. Once you are jealous of someone else, you crave what they have: more goods, more acclaim, etc.
 2. Coveting is strictly prohibited by the Tenth Commandment
 3. Covetousness leads to greed and jealousy of what others have
 4. James 4:1-2 takes his remarks a step further: coveting creates quarreling and fighting
 5. It is one of the many sinful impulses that must be changed

II. Principle for Dealing with Disorder and Vile Practices

- A. Don't boast; don't be false to the truth, 14
 1. Boasting is often a way of elevating ourselves above others
 2. It may be in indication that you are competing with them for attention or recognition
 3. It could be in the case of his audience that people are boasting of their wisdom
 4. Don't be false to the truth: don't deny that your wisdom is utterly false, a mere pretense of righteousness
 5. Might this be a demonstration of the false righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?
 6. They vie for attention; they only make themselves look good without really being good
 7. Jesus says they are like whitewashed tombs
- B. Show wisdom by your good conduct, 13
 1. Behavior, not mere words, demonstrates a righteous life
 2. God tells Cain, "If you do right, will you not be accepted?"
 3. Done in the "meekness of wisdom"
 4. Wisdom from God always begins with humility, Micah 6:8
 5. James 4:6 affirms the need for humility toward God
 6. It also replace jealousy toward others

7. You can't be humble toward God and seek to elevate yourself above others at the same time
8. James calls this earthly, unspiritual, and demonic wisdom

III. The Program: Adopt wisdom's traits

- Pure: the indispensable foundation; freedom from defilement, and we get it first from Christ's sacrifice but maintain it by keep ourselves unstained by the world (1:27)
- Peaceable: true wisdom is not disputatious but conciliatory, seeking peace: blessed are the peacemakers, the very opposite of jealous and ambitious
- Gentle: can be translated "humane"; used by Greek philosophers to contrast the person who wanted "strict justice," a man who is fair, considerate, and generous rather than rigid and exacting in his dealings with others
- Open to reason: "yielding to persuasion"; remember James' "be quick to listen"; someone who defers to others when there is no moral or major theological issues at stake—and by implication, someone who can tell the difference between major and minor issues
- Full of mercy and good fruits: mercy in contrast with judgment; mercy will also demonstrate itself in doing good to others (2:16), and blessed are the merciful; good fruits are the natural result of wisdom demonstrating itself by its behavior
- Impartial: single-mindedness, undivided in mind; a repeat of James 1:6, someone fully devoted to God
- Sincere: untainted by hypocrisy; there was likely more than a hint of Pharisaic hypocrisy lingering among these early Jewish Christians; might it still be around

Conclusion:

1. Jealousy and selfish ambition will continue to be problems with any group of sinful people.
2. James wants us to replace them with the wisdom demonstrated by meekness and good conduct.
3. Wisdom's traits perhaps must be studied, pondered, and adopted even if ever so slowly.
4. James assumes people who have accepted the Gospel: replace jealousy and selfish ambition with godly wisdom is nothing short of "put off the old self, and put on the new."
5. We encourage every person to adopt this Gospel for a good way of life but also for your personal salvation.