

The Letter of James

Faith that works!

Study 8 – Wisdom from above

Introduction

Although words such as ‘wisdom’ and ‘wise’ may sound a little bit old fashioned, they are in fact strong and compelling words. People may not necessarily want to be known as ‘wise’ but no-one wants the reputation of being a fool, especially when it comes to the important decisions of life.

What is striking about James 3:13-4:12, our passage for this study is that James makes it clear that there are two kinds of wisdom. On the one hand there is ‘wisdom from above’ i.e. wisdom that comes down from heaven as God’s gift to those who ask Him for it (3:17 *cf* 1:5). On the other there is ‘wisdom from below’ i.e. the wisdom that characterises the world in general and that in fact comes from the evil one (3:15). Life in this world thus involves a choice about which ‘wisdom’ to follow. What is more, the choice we make in this regard reveals something about what is going on in our hearts. The key question is this: What will rule our decisions, our choices, our responses to the everyday challenges of life? Will we be ruled by the wisdom of God made clear in his Word? Or will we follow the desires of our own hearts, shaped as they are by worldly, though devilish wisdom?

Although there are many areas in which this contrast between two kinds of wisdom could have been demonstrated, James focuses his attention on the area of personal relationships, especially those within the community of believers. According to James, the church is meant to be the place where godly wisdom is both to be expressed and nurtured. It is therefore also meant to be a place where worldly wisdom is not allowed to go unchallenged, not in a harsh and judgemental way, but in love and for the good of those who call God their Father. It is for this reason that he speaks as strongly as he does, both against that which though natural to us is evil, and for that which is good and which God by the work of His Spirit is producing within the hearts of His people.

Read James 3:13-4:12

Apply



In what way has this passage challenged your thinking?



In what way has this passage spoken to your heart and exposed hidden sins?



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this passage?