

XVI. James in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel Life According to James
“True Religion and Wisdom”
James 3:13–18
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March 23, 2014 – Morning Sermon

We will be concluding James 3 with this signal text in our study of the Gospel life according to James. James 3:13-18 says [13] *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* [14] *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* [15] *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* [16] *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* [17] *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* [18] *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We are in our sixteen study of this study of the Gospel life according to James. Every great literary composition or great work always has a couple of identifiable features. Here's one. They always have a single, penetrating, dominating, permeating theme. The writer has a thematic focus. There may be multiple and attendant truths and themes in the literary composition but they are all supportive to, subordinate of and flowing from this singular theme. This theme is usually found at a certain point and where it's found is the focus of the work or moment when you arrive there in this literary piece. That's where we are in this study.

We are at the thematic, focused moment and purpose of the book of James. Everything we have studied up to this point has subordinate to, supportive of and leading us to these verses in James 3:13-18 and everything we will study after this flow from this particular paragraph of the text. When you get to moments like this either the writer makes it a crescendo of celebration, insight and proclamation or the writer will make it a moment of reflection and thoughtfulness. James has made it a moment of clarity and integrity as he makes it clear that your only hope in a sin cursed world and as a Christian to live this life is to have a life that is permeated, penetrated and saturated with Gospel wisdom from above.

What does it look like and how do you get it? He is not going to leave us in the dark on this because it's too important to us. As we move into this he will make clear to us that this wisdom of life is necessary for multiple reasons in terms of how we live life so he opens it up with a rhetorical question in James 3:13 that says 'who among you is wise and understanding?' That little phrase has just navigated all of us all the way back to the books of wisdom in the Old Testament, particularly the unfolding of the book of Proverbs. The unfolding of the book of Proverbs is this; what you need is accurate true knowledge revealed from heaven and knowledge must be joined with understanding. Knowledge without understanding is only the amassing of trivia and facts. That understanding is discernment.

Who has accurate knowledge and God given discernment and understanding? You will know it by their wisdom, knowledge, understanding issues and discernment. What does wisdom look like from above? What marks it? What characterizes it? What identifies it? How do you obtain it? James wants to answer those questions for us with great clarity and stark reality.

The book is important to me but this section in general is because it has affected my life. This paragraph has given me a desired discipline in my life. When I begin to work on every sermon it is this paragraph that guides me in something. That is a desired discipline of an intercessory prayer request, “God, this is Your Word, please let me understand it with wisdom from above and let me preach it so that people will see the wisdom from above.” That prayer in some form or fashion is every single day in my study when I go to the sacred text. “God, I am incapable of this. I am not sufficient for this but I have been called to this so please let me understand Your Word from wisdom from above and upon knowledge, understanding let me communicate wisdom from above to those who will hear but it doesn’t stop there.

Whenever I have a meeting in my office there it is always opened not perfunctory and not in a legalistic manner but with a desired discipline and pray “God, we’re about to handle the needs of your people, the business of your church and as the leadership of your church, please give us wisdom.” If someone like Solomon has only one request and it’s for wisdom, how much more should I or we ask for that? Then in those myriads of privileged opportunities come into your marriage, your child, your friends, your vocation, your calling, your decisions, a diagnosis from a doctor and then you say ‘pastor I need to talk to you’ when you’ve been there you know the first thing we’re going to pray for even before we start talking. It’s wisdom from above.

We either get wisdom from above or we’ll apply the wisdom from below which is unspiritual, earthly, demonic, creates chaos and destroys everywhere it’s embraced. It has gone beyond that. Here at Briarwood God has given us the opportunity to extend the pulpit ministry of this church through various media enterprises. They are called “In Perspective.” God, give us the wisdom from above. I title every sermon like this one; The Book of James in Biblical Perspective. What glasses do you wear, read, interpret, gaze upon the dynamics of life, the themes of life and the challenges of life? How are you viewing it? That’s the issue of wisdom and it will either be wisdom from above or wisdom from below.

The Christian life is full of challenges. The God of our salvation is transcendent. He is also imminent. He is right here dwelling in my life. He is over all the heavens and the earth in His transcendence. How do those two things get married in my perspective as a Christian? Here is God’s grace. Here is God’s justice. Here is the Gospel use of grace. Here is the Gospel use of law. How do those things get married in communication and decision making in life? The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The love of God is what constrains us. How do those two dynamics marry and interdependently function? Truth and love, how do I accept, receive and minister to sinners while I hate sin? How do I receive a sinner and not enable a sin? It is wisdom that we need in how these things of the Christian life come together and if you don’t have wisdom from above to do that then you’ll just constantly vacillate by being a love person for a while and then a transcendent god person for a while and then an imminent god person for a while vacillating from one post to one pillar and then to another, instead of

threads woven in the tapestry of wisdom from above. How do those things happen in our life?

There is wisdom from above and wisdom from below. Twos are all in the Bible. There are two gates, one wide and one narrow. There are two highways, one wide and one narrow. There are two destinations, hell or heaven. There are two groups that will stand at the judgment, sheep and goats. There will be two books at the judgment, the books of death and the book of life. There are two foundations in life, sand and rock. We always keep trying to make choice three. There are two wisdoms. There is wisdom from below that is earthly, demonic, unspiritual, creates vile behavior and it calls good evil and evil good and it is very reasonable to the man-centered mind. Where do I get God centered wisdom? What does wisdom from above look like? As you leave this you'll make decisions today and what wisdom will guide your heart?

Let me remind you of the theme of James. The theme of James is the Gospel Life is a life of persistent ministry and joyful maturation in a sin-cursed world informed by the God-sent gift of "Wisdom from Above." He is writing to His people. James is the half-brother of Jesus, converted after the resurrection and half way into his ministry he writes this book and in another fourteen years he'll be holding fast to Jesus Christ and will be killed. This book is the first written book of the New Testament and the most quoted book of the New Testament because all of that knowledge, wisdom and understanding from the early books of wisdom are now summed up in this Gospel book of wisdom.

As he writes this book he writes it to his beloved brothers, those who profess faith in Jesus Christ who he ministers to. You say you have a Gospel foundation in Christ, you have a Gospel motivation which is the love of Christ and you're now wanting to live a Gospel life for Christ. You want to be Christ-shaped, Christ-honoring and Christ-glorifying, then you have to have wisdom in a Genesis 3 world, in a sin-cursed world. How do you pull these great themes together in life? How do you face the difficulty of the challenges of life in a sin-cursed world? You are dependent upon wisdom. Now where will you draw from – above or below?

James 3:13 says [13] *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his (those who are wise and understanding and how do you get it?) good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* Now navigate back with me. In James 1 he tells us what it means to live in this sin-cursed world and its trials. He says you need wisdom from above and when you get that wisdom from above it will lead to a life of true religion. True religion is the product of a saving relationship with Christ and not the avenue to the saving relationship with Christ. Christ has come down and you put your trust in Him. Man-made religion remakes God in man's image and arrogantly thinks his religion can appease God. True religion says that I need God to come from above, down here to save me by grace and this is the consequence of it.

True religion is marked by three things found in James 1:26-28. It is marked by a bridled tongue, public ministries of grace and mercy to the most cast off of society and thirdly a personal commitment to holiness in life. Then he gives you a trial. You are in a worship service and two men walk in, a rich one and a poor one. Now we are going to find out what kind of wisdom you have. If you have wisdom from below you'll go after the rich man and you'll denigrate the poor man at your feet because you are absorbed by the glory of this world instead of the glory of God. That's why I tell you in true religion there is no place for partiality and discrimination for we're all made in the image of God

and all in need of the saving grace of God. Our glory is not in the rings of this world or the gold in this world or the acclaim of this world. Our glory is in Jesus Christ for we boast in the Lord.

Here is another trial. You say that you have saving faith but do you? If you are professor of saving faith, are you a possessor of saving faith, as one preacher said? To be a possessor of saving faith you must be a professor of saving faith. With the mouth we confess Him but not everybody who is a professor of faith is a possessor of faith. Everybody who is a possessor is a professor but not everybody who is a professor is a possessor. If you want to know you look at their life. If there is a root of grace there will be the fruit of grace. There will be a changed life, not perfection but a changed and changing life.

Let's go to another area, the tongue. We all need words, don't we? Here is what he says about the tongue. It directs lives and reveals hearts. Our tongue is like a rudder on a ship or a bit in the horse's mouth. Words direct lives. The words you say to people will direct and affect their life. The words you hear from people will direct and affect your life because you were made in the image of God. God is light, reveals Himself and communicates in the Word of God and now we know the God of the Word so also you will communicate. You don't know what it means to be a human being without communication and you don't know what it means to be a Christian without communication from God's Word through people into your life. That's why teachers have a stricter judgment, because of that important role and function in life.

One might think they'll just be their own teacher. If so you're not going anywhere. You need teachers so choose them carefully and rightly because when all is said and done the pupil becomes like the teacher. It directs your life. Then it reveals your heart. We can't live without words. They are powerful, what you say and what you hear.

I recently heard a pastor talk on this and as he researched this he found out about this king who thought 'People are born, people talk and I wonder what their primordial language would be?' If you're born in Africa you grew up speaking the language from that area because your dad and mom would teach it to you. If you are born in America you're going to learn Americanese. If you're born in England you'll learn English. If no one was there to teach you what would you speak? You were born to communicate. Do you really need to have someone speak to you? Have you ever wondered about the two dynamics that make the terror of hell? One is the torment of fire and the other is outer darkness, meaning total isolation. Soldiers used to say as rough soldier language 'see you in hell,' well no you won't. You who were made for relationships and communication will have nothing for eternity in hell. Have you ever wondered why isolation in prison, even if it was for the benefit of saving someone's life, ends up with people being hallucinogenic and disconnected from reality. In just a matter of months one can become insane from isolation because we were made for communication.

In order to find out what language kids would speak if no one communicated with them, this king took a number of babies right when they were born from their mothers and had people feed them, take care of them and benevolently raise them, doing anything and everything they needed except they were not allowed to talk to them so they were raised in verbal isolation. Every one of those babies died before they were two years of age. Our words are crucial. What we hear directs us and what we speak directs others.

Jesus said that a man speaks from his heart. So words reveal a man's heart. So in James the spring will flow from the pond. To have fresh water, the water of life, I need a new heart and I need to keep it cleansed and filled so that my mouth will pour forth. How do I get my heart cleansed and filled? I need wisdom from above in my heart. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus is in the area of the shadow of paganism and He said "Who do people say that I am?" "They say You're John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah, one of the prophets." "Who do you say that I am?" Peter says "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God!" "Blessed are you Simon Barjona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father who is in heaven." In other words from Peter's mouth from what had come through his transforming mind to his heart, He is saying that his mouth is speaking from his heart and it is speaking wisdom from above and the Father revealed this to him.

Then Jesus says "I'm going to go to Jerusalem and I'm going to be put to death. In three days I'll be raised." Then from the same mouth and same tongue now goes to earthly wisdom, wisdom from below and Peter says "God forbid this should happen to You!" Now Peter instead of a confessor of Christ decides he is going to be the controller of Christ and Christ says to Peter "Get thee behind Me Satan!" Now what is your heart filled with? It is filled with wisdom from below. Here's the key which is found in the following verse, 'You have set your mind on man's interest and not on God's interest.' To fill the heart with wisdom the mind has to be renewed with Gospel wisdom from above.

When that happens, what does that look like? Notice the picture that he draws of Gospel wisdom from above. James 3:13b says, *By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* A wise man is not the answer man. He is not a walking Wikipedia or a walking google. No, he has true knowledge and understanding but a man or woman that has Godly wisdom from above are people that show it not by being answer people but by the way they apply that wisdom with understanding to their life. They don't present the arrogance of self-achievement, they produce the meekness of wisdom that is growing in their life. It is the meekness of wisdom that identifies them. Let's go to the next verse.

James 3:14 says [14] *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* Here's the alternative. Here is wisdom from above and you'll see it because there is good conduct that is shown in the meekness of wisdom but the contrast is wisdom from below and that results in bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. You were made to be ambitious but the question is what are you ambitious about, great things for the Lord or great things for yourself? Make it your ambition to lead a Godly life, is what Paul says, but this is self-centered, self-exalting ambition. Whenever you have selfish ambition you'll have bitter jealousy. The problem is not that I need to learn a new vocabulary or speech therapy, the problem is the heart. Selfish ambition is in your heart. This leads to boasting in yourself and falseness to the truth. The believer, while grateful for every victory of grace, is always acknowledging it is of grace and their boast is in the Lord because of what is filling their hearts.

The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart and that's where you'll find the solution. First you need a new heart, then a cleansed heart and then an overflowing heart with wisdom from above. Now James goes to build on this in the following verse. James 3:15 says [15] *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* This is wisdom that is consumed with the

now or how you get the next check or next whatever. It is consumed with self so it predominately becomes committed to the earthly. It is consumption with the unspiritual; what can I eat or drink, who can I manipulate, and who can I get in bed for sex. It is sensual and not spiritual. It is focused upon the gratification of appetites. Thirdly, wisdom from below is demonic. It comes from the pit of hell and leads to the pit of hell. Now James goes back to jealousy and selfish ambition.

James 3:16 says [16] *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* It will go beyond vile practice for good will become evil and evil will be called good. For example, one will say it's good to take the life of an unborn infant, it's virtuous, wherever there is early wisdom. It is good to take the life of the helpless or unwanted. That's earthly wisdom. The end justifies the means and it's all about me and nothing can get in the way of that.

Here is the profile for you. James 3:17 says [17] *But the wisdom from above is first pure* (It is the work of the redeeming grace of Christ), *then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* Wisdom from above leads to impartiality, not partiality and it leads to sincerity and transparency in life and speech. This could be a whole series of sermons. You can take this profile that has given you nine marks of wisdom from above and compare them to the fruit of the Spirit. That is a wonderful little study that you can do and see how they work together. Also take a look at how each one builds on the other. Purity of God's work in our life will make peacemakers, will be peaceable, reconcilers, not picking fights. We have peace with God therefore we can have the peace of God and therefore we can point people to peace with God. That means there is gentleness even when dealing with difficult situations. There is reasonableness and the wise man is approachable. There is mercifulness and good fruits. It will call it a harvest of good fruits. That leads to impartiality and sincerity. Let's look at the result.

James 3:18 says [18] *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* What is the harvest of righteousness? I want to give you four considerations of it and then I'll give you a life takeaway. The first place where wisdom from above will bring a harvest of righteousness is in your personal life. Those great themes of the faith you'll be able to join together – the love of God, fear of God, grace, truth, how to embrace sinners, how not to enable sin. It will begin to give you that wisdom from above. So it is a harvest of personal righteousness.

Secondly, that will lead to a harvest of relationship righteousness. It will make a different daddy to his children, a different mother to her children, and a different husband to his wife. In other words the husband will become an asset to his wife and his wife will become an asset to her husband. The parents will become assets to Godly righteousness to their children. The children will honor their parents when they're filled with wisdom from above and they will obey their parents. There will be submission that is found. There will be a right relationship among God's people where we will profit one another by its presence. When we're harvesting personal righteousness it will overflow into reconciliation and relational righteousness with each other.

When it overflows to relational righteousness, what will that do? To those whom we have these reconciled, grace filled relationships, they will then be spurred on and encouraged to their own harvest of personal righteousness. As they are spurred on to their own harvest of personal righteousness, as parents spur their children on, as children

spur their parents on, as friends spur one another on to love and good deeds in and for Christ, then that will produce in them a fourth harvest and that's a harvest of their relationships which will be reconciled and redemptive as well.

The harvest of righteousness from wisdom from above in your personal life and righteousness as these themes are given and you know how to respond to the issues of life, will then lead to relational redemptive righteousness and that then leads those that you are related to, to their own harvest of personal righteousness and then that leads them to redemptive relationships in their life as well. So you see this beautiful chain unfolding. So what does it look like? Here's the takeaway. I know this takeaway doesn't fit on a bumper sticker but the Christian life doesn't fit on a bumper sticker either.

The takeaway is wisdom from above is revealed in the life of a Christian, empowered by the Spirit of God, marked by the fear of God, propelled by the love of God, secured by the grace of God and it will always rejoice in the glory of God. So the fear of God is the capstone, the foundation and the love of God is the launching pad. The more you glorify God with wisdom from above, the more joy you'll have in your life instead of disorder, chaos and emptiness. The more joy you have in your life the more you'll glorify God with your life. That will begin to unfold with your life.

Pastor, how can I get this wisdom from above? Number one is conversion. If you're reading this today and you don't know Jesus Christ, by God's common grace you may act with wisdom every once in a while but if you want a heart full of wisdom from above you have to have a new heart. I invite you this day, not to be a member at Briarwood even though we'd love to have you here at Briarwood we can't give you what you need in conversion, but I want to invite you to Jesus. 'Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me.' Come to Christ and when you do from Christ above you'll get a new heart, a new record, a new life, a new family, a new home and Christ is the Giver of your record, your heart, your life, your family and your home so that where He is there you will be with Him for all eternity. It is from above. What does Jesus tell Nicodemus? He tells him he must be born from above. So to get wisdom from above you must first be born again from above with that new heart, new record, new life and new home from Christ.

I'd like to look at I Corinthians 1. What happens when you become a believer? It is by the grace of God, the Gospel of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus. So now you're in Christ and Christ is in you. God has done this from above. I Corinthians 1:30-31 says [30] *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, [31] so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."* He is our wisdom. So in conversion you get Christ and Christ gets you. When this happens you now have wisdom from above. You are no longer boasting in yourself and no longer selfish ambition, now the meekness of having been saved with grace and the courage to boast in Christ alone because He is our wisdom from above. From above He has given us a renewed mind through which Gospel wisdom is flowing in our heart, flushing out the pockets of poison so that from the heart a stream of life would come through our tongue.

Decisions in life will come forth in the meekness and good conduct in our lives. That word good conduct and meekness in wisdom is interesting. The English language is

bereft of any nuance whatsoever. For instance I would say to our organist “Man, I love that prelude. Praise the Lord for that prelude. That was awesome. I love the way you do that for us, love ya’ man.” Then I’m gone for a week, I come home and I see my wife. I say to her “Honey, I love you. I looove you.” I don’t say that to our organist and I don’t say to my wife “Love ya’ woman.” We have to use tone to nuance.

In the Greek language you have six words for love. It’s amazing all the words you have to choose from. The word ‘good’ in the Greek comes with two words. One word means good, morally, right in contrast to evil, sinfully wrong. That is not the word that is used here. It is another word for good that describes the beauty of right choices for right reasons. It literally means beautiful, attractive. What happens to believers is they not only make the right decisions but they do it in the right way so the meekness of wisdom attracts people to us and through us to Christ. It is that beauty of right conduct that he is pointing to and that comes from the converting work and power of the Gospel work of Jesus Christ.

The second one is the fear of God and the love of God. When you are converted the fear of God becomes the capstone of your life and the love of God becomes the foundation stone, the launching pad of life. The love of God propels us and constrains us and the fear of God unifies us. God I’m in Your presence and my life matters. I am a child of the King who indwells me and He is over all. This majestic God is my Savior and my words and choices are saying something about You. My life decisions are worship informed by wisdom from above. It is developed in the context of the trial of life. We can see this in James 1. Wisdom from above comes from conversion and it is marked out by the fear of God and propelled by the love of God.

Thirdly, wisdom from above also comes from the trials of life. James 1:2-4 says *[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* In this broken world God is sovereignly taking these trials of life and He is using them to develop us and refine us. They are tests. They show us what we know, what we need to know and where we need to grow. So the trials of life are the blessing of God to be at work in our life.

Fourthly, wisdom from above then comes from persistent and believing prayer. As the trials of life show me what I know, what I need to know and where I need to grow, then what do I do? James 1:5-8 says *[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

How do I get wisdom from above? I get it through conversion. I belong to the Lord. The fear of the Lord is my capstone. The love of the Lord is my launching stone. The trials of life are refining me, growing me, showing me and that sends me to my knees in persistent and believing prayer. Then that sends me to the Bible. Let’s look at James 1:16-18, 21-22 says *[16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* (God is who He is. He is the I Am and

gives me every good gift from above.) [18] *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

[21] *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.* [22] *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* Where else do I get this wisdom from above? I go to that repository of wisdom, the Word of God, first to hear it and then to do it which means you need to prioritize the faithful preaching and hearing of God's Word.

You need to prioritize your relationship with your parents. Children listen to me. We found out that Jesus grew in wisdom when He went home and was submissive to His parents. He grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. The mark of an unbelieving culture is disobedience to parents. The mark of wisdom is to draw from your parents. The mark of wisdom is to draw from your family – uncles, aunts, parents, grandparents, your family and the family of God.

Then you need to have models for your life. Over thirty times in the Bible it commands us to find models to imitate. Find models to imitate for inspiration and clarity. Then you need mentors, small group disciplers to hold you accountable, work with you more closely in intimate ways in the context of believers as well. Those things are desperately needed in our lives. That is where you get wisdom from above.

What are the pitfalls? The first pitfall is the stupidity of this blasphemous prosperity gospel that says when difficulties come into your life that means you didn't have enough faith because if you had enough faith Jesus would have just taken you onto heaven. The Bible is clear. It has been granted to us not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake. The Bible says to take up your cross. That is suffering. It has been granted unto you to suffer for His sake because that is a sovereign gift of God to help develop within you wisdom that shows you what you know and what you yet need to know. Why does the prosperity gospel get a hearing among us? It gets a hearing because we want to avoid the trials of life and we think that when we come to Jesus He'll take them away. No, He will actually send trials in your life because He loves you. Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines.

Don't run from the trials but I didn't say seek them and when they come embrace them and trace the rainbow through the rain. The hand of a sovereign God is at work in your heart and in your life. We are so fascinated with youth. In the sixth grade, I got hit by a car, went up in the air and then fell on my head. When I woke up the PE teacher from my Junior High who was so gorgeous was the one who had hit me and she was bending over me, caressing my hair and kissing me on the forehead. I thought I had gone to heaven for a moment. I looked down at my feet and I was so embarrassed. I had on my dad's shoes and you could tell it. I had them on because I wanted to grow up and be and dress like my daddy. I now live in a culture where dads want to grow up and dress like their kids. The bigger blessing of that is that they taught me to look at older people who conduct themselves with respect and dignity and go learn from them.

It is no accident that Jesus sat down in the temple and asked questions of the leaders. Don't discount your elders. Give them a voice in your life. You would be amazed at the wisdom you'll gain. I have had the privilege to pastor a number of judges and even some here in my three churches. I want to give you the story of one judge who had a serial murderer in front of him. He was a Christian judge. The penalty without a doubt was death and he gave it. That Christian judge was a part of our church and our

prison ministry. He went to the prison, death row, to the man he sentenced to death and led him to Christ. Then he went and started a Bible study with him and took his son with him. Do you see the wisdom of a Christian man? As a part of the state he had the wisdom to know what he was supposed to do. As a part of the Lord's church he knew what he was supposed to do with those in prison, whether he sentenced them there as a judge or magistrate or not and he went and led the man to Christ. Then he is supposed to teach his son when he rises up and walks by the wayside so he takes his son with him. That is wisdom that you see in that life.

You get that wisdom from above. You get it through faithful preaching, your family, your parents, models and mentors but you get it when you fix your eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:1-2 says *[1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* See all of the things in our life melt together at the cross. The holiness of God meets the love of God. The grace of God meets the justice of God. Sinners against God are saved to the glory of God. See our wisdom and fix your eyes on Christ who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despised its shame and has sat down at the right hand of the father. It is that wisdom, your Savior that will fill your heart and a harvest of righteousness – fruit to His glory and your joy. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this key text that James has led us to and from which he'll lead us through the rest of this book but Father I pray that Your Holy Spirit is leading those reading this who have not yet come to Christ, to Christ. As they come to Him say "Lord, I'm a sinner and I simply put my trust in Jesus alone. Be Thou my wisdom O Lord and Savior of my life." Father, for all of us who know Christ may the fear of the Lord be the beginning and unifying thread of all wisdom. May the love of God propel us to embrace the wisdom. May the trials of life reveal to us our lack of wisdom. May we then go to prayer and call upon You who freely gives to His people who asks single-mindedly wisdom upon wisdom and may we go to Your Word through study, preaching, parents, family, models and mentors and make us a wise people who by the beauty of our lives, growing in grace will draw others to our beautiful Savior, who is our wisdom, I pray in Jesus Name, Amen.