

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 03: 17-18

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Today we'll continue to read James chapter 3, from verse 17 to verse 18.

In this chapter, verse 13, James asks, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom." Wisdom emphasizes insight into various people, things, and matters, while understanding is the discernment and judgment that arises from this insight. After posing the question, James immediately tells us that true wisdom will manifest in life through various good qualities in a gentle and meek manner. If we refer to the discussions on wisdom in Proverbs and Psalms, we will find that the true wisdom James speaks of comes from fearing God, knowing God, and obeying God.

James then tells us that the wisdom of the world is earthly in nature, sensual in content, and demonic in origin. On the other hand, true wisdom comes from above, meaning its source is God and it is God's wisdom. The nature of true wisdom is heavenly, and its content is described in verse 17.

Verse 17: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Initially, James talks about wisdom from above, which is God's wisdom. So, what is God's wisdom? Interestingly, James does not give us a long list of nouns to show how rich God's wisdom is. Instead, James gives us an order, almost like a process. The first is purity; the word "pure" can also mean "clean." Next is peace, translated in the NIV as "peace-loving." The third is gentleness, translated as "gentle" or "considerate." The fourth is submissiveness, translated as "submissive" or

"obedient." The fifth is mercy, translated as "full of mercy." The sixth is good fruits, translated as "full of good fruits."

Following this, James mentions impartiality and sincerity, with these two terms describing the good fruits. This implies that the good fruits produced are without partiality and without hypocrisy. This contrasts with good deeds that stem from human intentions, which often carry biases and can sometimes be hypocritical, showing inconsistency between one's actions in public and private. True good fruits are impartial and sincere.

Here we see that James seems to describe a process of bearing good fruits, starting with purity. This means that we are pure and clean toward God, with no ill motives or personal interests involved; in other words, our conscience is clear and pure. The conscience acts as a channel between the spirit and the soul, and this channel is completely open.

The second step involves our soul's emotions, which are peace-loving, longing for reconciliation with God, and resting in God's presence. The third step involves our soul's mind, which is humble, gentle, and ready to receive new insights, new light, and new visions.

The fourth step involves our soul's will, which is submissive and able to fully obey God's will. The fifth step describes the richness of God's wisdom, which can flow from the spirit through a clear conscience to a prepared soul, filling our soul with compassion and mercy from God, and enabling us to love the people and things around us with God's love. The sixth step is the ability to bear many good fruits in our lives, providing a testimony of good character without partiality or hypocrisy.

Dear brothers and sisters, here James describes a process that produces a beautiful testimony in our lives from the inside out. Because James emphasizes practical living, people often mistake it for a set of behavioral guidelines, leading many renowned preachers to underestimate the Book of James. Regarding different books of the Bible, our attitude should be to reconcile and find the complementary relationships between them, bringing out a balanced understanding. We should not

favor one over the other, nor use one to invalidate the other. All scripture is God-breathed, and therefore all books and chapters are consistent with each other.

If we have spiritual insight, we will recognize that Paul's letters are the key to understanding the Book of James. James talks about God's wisdom, emphasizing the good fruits this wisdom produces in us and even explaining the steps to producing these good fruits. However, James does not tell us what God's wisdom is; he merely quotes Psalms and Proverbs, urging us to fear God, know God, and obey God. He does not define God's wisdom or explain what it is. To understand what God's wisdom is, we need to read Paul's letters.

Regarding wisdom, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory." Here we see, like James, Paul clarifies that wisdom is not worldly wisdom, nor human wisdom, but the mysterious wisdom of God. This wisdom was previously hidden from people, so the prophets of the Old Testament did not know it.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, Paul tells us, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Paul declares that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This understanding of Christ as God's wisdom is the key to unlocking the Book of James.

When we believe in Jesus Christ and are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our spirit. The Holy Spirit brings the person, work, and accomplishments of Christ. Since Christ is God's wisdom, all the riches of God's wisdom are in Christ and are brought to us through the Holy Spirit. Christ, being the power of God, is ready to supply us with all the riches of wisdom.

Our requirement is to have a clear conscience and a prepared soul, loving reconciliation with God in our emotions, being humble and gentle in our minds, and submissive in our will. If we are prepared in this way, God's wisdom will flow from

our spirit to our soul and from our soul to our bodily actions. We will then be able to bear abundant good fruits in our lives and become witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Verse 18: "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Taking this verse alone can leave us a bit confused: "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." To understand it, we need to look at verse 17. We see that the virtue of making peace grows from something. How does it grow? God's wisdom is Christ, and all the riches of Christ are in our spirit. Christ is the sower who plants the seeds of peace in our hearts. As long as our hearts are good soil, they will produce the fruit of peace.

In Galatians 5:22-23, there are nine fruits of the Spirit listed, and peace is one of them. When the fruit of peace grows in our hearts, we can become peacemakers in our lives. Matthew 5:9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Being a peacemaker is one of the eight essential qualities of the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. The character of a peacemaker comes from the Holy Spirit planting the seed of Christ's peace in our hearts. This seed sprouts, takes root, grows, and eventually bears the fruit of peace, producing this virtue in us. This way, the verse becomes much richer in meaning.

However, there is another detail here: those who make peace sow the fruit of peace. This makes sense. But why does James call it the fruit of righteousness? In James 2:14-26, he emphasizes that Christians, having been justified by faith and born again, should live a life full of virtues. This prepares us for the judgment seat of Christ, where we can be justified by our works. Therefore, in this verse, James uses the term "fruit of righteousness" to refer back to his discussion in 2:14-26. We need to use Paul's letters to explain the Book of James.

Paul says in Romans 3:25-26, "God set forth Jesus as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

We see that Jesus became the propitiation, and Jesus Christ Himself is the righteousness of God. Now, through the blood of Jesus Christ, God also declares all who believe in Christ as righteous. This is the first step of becoming a Christian, entirely by grace, having nothing to do with our works. However, after being born again and saved, Paul encourages us to move forward.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." Paul encourages us to live for the Lord, meaning to live a life full of virtues. Then in 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul continues, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The purpose of our being saved by grace is that one day we may become the righteousness of God.

We begin by being justified by faith, and then we progress to being made righteous by faith. Justification by faith is completely objective, positional—it's what Jesus Christ did for us. To be made righteous by faith, we must no longer live for ourselves but for the Lord Jesus Christ. May every detail of our lives be guided by the Holy Spirit, living out a life filled with virtues so that we may become the righteousness of God.

Paul provides us with the theoretical foundation, while James uses examples from life to show us how to be made righteous by faith. Taking peace as an example, planting the seed of peace in our hearts allows us to bear the fruit of peace in our souls and become peacemakers in our lives, thereby embodying the character of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters, let's hope that we can have a balanced perspective on every book in the Bible. May God grant us wisdom from above so that we truly understand what God wants to say to us through the Book of James.

Let's pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, thank you! You are the wisdom of God. When we accept You as our Savior for life, You come to dwell within us, bringing all the riches of God's wisdom. Help us have a clean conscience and a prepared soul—loving reconciliation in our emotions, humility and gentleness in our thoughts, and readiness to obey in our will. May the riches of Christ supply our souls, bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and live out a beautiful testimony in life. Bless that every day of my life may bring you joy. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!