

# James: The Test of Wisdom

*James 3:13-18*

## **The Litmus Test (v. 13)**

- The churches that James wrote to likely were dealing with divisiveness
  - Much of his language around wisdom in this section speaks to determining who speaks with the authority rooted in Holy Spirit-given wisdom
- James offers a simple test for those who claim to be wise & learned
  - Wise: Applying the truth in appropriate ways
  - Learned: An expert in a field
    - These are qualifications given in the OT for Israel's leadership (Deut 1:13; 4:6)
    - Also used to describe the prophet Daniel (Dan 5:11)
- The test: Do they practice what they preach?
  - Good works
  - Humility
- However, a simple test is not enough if you don't understand the results
  - Thankfully, James gives us a way to interpret the results

## **Worldly Wisdom (v. 14-16)**

- The antithesis of humility is:
  - Bitter envy: a self-oriented desire to possess things that are not ours (see Acts 5:17; 13:45; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20)
  - Selfish ambition (*eritheia*):
    - Related to strife (*eris*; cf. Rom 1:29; 13:13; 1 Cor 1:11; 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Tts 3:9)
- This false "wisdom" is characterized as:
  - Earthly: Based on human reason, not divine revelation (the world)
  - Unspiritual: Based on a worldview that excludes God (the flesh)
  - Demonic: Based on lies from our spiritual enemy (the devil)

## **The Marks of Real Wisdom (v. 17-18)**

- Those with godly wisdom are:
  - Pure: innocence & moral blamelessness
  - Peace-loving: seeking unity
  - Considerate: yielding to the needs of others
  - Submissive: yielding to the ideas of others, when it is in non-essential areas
  - Merciful: love for one's neighbor that shows itself in action (2:8-13)
  - Fruitful in good deeds (2:14-26)
  - Impartial: not showing favoritism (2:1-4)
  - Sincere (lit. "not playing a part"): Transparency
- This test is summarized in v. 18
  - Those who are truly wise make peace, not division, and show their wisdom through their righteous behavior
  - "Like true faith (2:14-26), true wisdom is identified by the quality of life that it produces." - Douglas J. Moo

## So What?

- Are we putting the sources we consume as wisdom to the test?
- Would we pass this test?
  - If not, then we need to seek God to make us wise (Jas 1:5)

**Meditation Verse:** *James 3:17*