

JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

VII. True Versus False Wisdoms In Bible Teachers

(James 3:13-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. James had introduced the subject of Bible teachers in the church in James 3:1, and he returned to deal with the subject by contrasting true versus false "wisdoms" in Bible teachers in James 3:13-18. (R. V. G. Tasker, The General Epistle of James, 1974, p. 79) We thus view the passage for our insight, application and edification:

II. True Versus False Wisdoms In Bible Teachers, James 3:13-18.

- A. James rhetorically asked his readers who was "morally insightful, skilled in life's practical issues" (*sophos*) and "intellectually perceptive with scientific acumen" (*epistemon*) among his readers, James 3:13a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 828. These two qualities were essential for teaching the Bible effectively.
- B. A good Bible teacher was thus to demonstrate his qualifications by way of a good manner of life marked by "wise meekness," *prauteti sophias*, James 3:13b NIV; *Ibid.*
- C. However, if the teachers possessed bitter envy and "selfish ambition" (*eritheia*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 309) in their hearts, they were not to boast in such attitudes, for such boasting amounts to lying against the truth, exposing such teachers as possessing a false "wisdom," James 3:14; *Ibid.*
- D. Such a false "wisdom" does not come down from God in heaven above, but is "earthly" (*epiggeios*, *Ibid.*, p. 290), "unspiritual, pertaining to the natural man" (*psuchikos*, *Ibid.*, p. 902) and "demonic" (*daimoniodes*, *Ibid.*, p. 168), for where envy and selfish ambition exist, there will also be "disorder, unruliness" (*akatastasia*, *Ibid.*, p. 29) and every "worthless, bad" (*phaulos*, *Ibid.*, p. 862) work, James 3:15-16.
- E. In contrast, God's wisdom that is from heaven is first "pure, holy" (*hagnos*, *Ibid.*, p. 11-12), then "peaceable" (*eirenikos*, *Ibid.*, p. 227), "easy to be entreated" (*eupeithes*, Joseph Henry Thayer, Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1963, p. 261), full of mercy and good fruits, "impartial" (*adiakritos*, *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 16) and "unhypocritical, sincere" (*anupokritos*, *Ibid.*, p. 76), James 3:17.
- F. Consequently, James 3:18 literally translates, "And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace," James 3:18 ESV; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 785. In other words, James claimed that those who teach Scripture with the wisdom that comes from God "sow" -- figurative for "teach" -- the truth to their hearers in a peaceable manner, what leads to a harvest of righteousness in the application of that truth in the lives of the listeners! By implication, those with a false "wisdom" that is not from God do not teach the truth in an atmosphere of peace because of their ungodly thinking and behavior. That results in a lack of spiritual vitality in the hearers with the ensuing failure of producing a harvest of righteousness in the hearers' lives!

Lesson: *One can teach Scripture with false "wisdom" marked by bitter envy and selfish ambition that is earthly, unspiritual and demonic and that produces unruly disorder and every worthless work. Conversely, one can teach Scripture with God's wisdom that is first pure, then compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere that produces a harvest of righteousness in the hearers since the Bible's truth is taught in a peaceful atmosphere.*

Application: *(1) Since false "wisdom" is marked by even the demonic and true "wisdom" comes from God, direct opposites of one another, may we realize the IMPORTANCE of watching what kind of "wisdom" we either use in teaching or that we sit under if we are the man in the pew! (2) If we who teach Scripture realize from James 3:13-18 that we have taught with the "false" wisdom that is destructive and not edifying, may we repent, confess it to the Lord, and rely on the Holy Spirit to conduct ourselves in a way that edifies the hearers. (3) Since Bible teaching necessarily requires not only moral insight that is skilled in practical issues, but also intellectual perception with scientific acumen to understand what Scripture ACTUALLY teaches in its grammatical, historical and cultural contexts, may we who teach and those who sit in the pew realize the need for training and study that must necessarily precede one's teaching! This involves the teacher's obtaining the training needed to understand the Bible and how to expound it along with the time and efforts needed to produce spiritually edifying lessons and sermons. (4) 1 Timothy 4:13-16 implies that Timothy needed to be fully absorbed in his ministry of the Word for his listeners to realize his spiritual advancement in his own life (1 Timothy 4:15b), so may every Bible teacher saturate his mind and heart with Scripture for the edification of his listeners, and for the confidence of the listeners to be built up, assured that they also will grow in sitting under such a teacher's or pastor's ministry.*