

Wisdom from Above: More Than Common Sense (Part 2)

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 00] I wanted to also acknowledge as we get ready for this message that I am elevated this morning.

Thanks to Michael Erdly and I think Clyde came and helped out as well. He built this beautiful platform for me over the week and surprised me with it.

So I was worried that he had so much on his plate trying to earn a living and do what he does as a craftsman. And he's been spending so many hours down here. Y'all wouldn't believe the hours this guy's put in with his wife and a couple of the other men.

So I thought, well, I know how to build a box. I'll just come in here and build a frame and we'll figure out how to cover it and all that kind of stuff. And man, I'm glad I didn't do it.

Thank you, Michael. Well, and I want you to know what he told me this morning. He said, this is about you stepping up and elevating the word of God. Isn't that good?

[1 : 04] So this is a reminder to me to lift high the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of the living God. And that's what we're about here. So what I'm doing with you this morning is part two and the title Wisdom from Above More Than Common Sense.

So I want to encourage those of you who weren't able to be here last week, last Sunday, for whatever reason, to maybe listen to that sermon, even after this one. It's fine because I'll give you a quick little outline of what I did last week.

But I won't be able to go into any great detail. And I want you to be able to hear that detail as James spends the first half of the passage we'll be in, making a contrast between what is worldly wisdom with heavenly wisdom.

Today we'll focus on the heavenly wisdom, God's wisdom, the wisdom we want to adopt and live by and understand, the wisdom we want to nurture our hearts.

But last week I talked in greater detail about the wisdom of the world and what's behind that wisdom, where it comes from and why. I'll only hit that in just a topical manner today so that we can move into the passage.

[2 : 11] Before we read the passage for today in James chapter 3, I want to make some introductory comments to you and kind of bring you into the mood and tone of what I want to talk about.

Now, if you've been queuing in to the latest on the news, I don't know how you keep up with world events, particularly events happening in our country. I mean, come on, a big, big event happened in November, and we had an administration change in mid-January, and things have been rocketing along in our nation, and you have seen the ripples of it across the world.

Well, however you get your news or whatever you do with dealing with the events of today, I think we can all agree, based on what's been going on over the past probably two or three months, that there is a battle raging in our government at unprecedented levels.

Black and white are being further distinguished in ways we haven't seen in years. And lines are being drawn in the sand. Only a handful of people, however, that are involved in all of this at the governmental level seem to realize that this is a spiritual battle between good and evil, between God's truth and Satan's lies.

Now, you need to be discerning. You don't have to be a spiritual elitist to see that. You just have to be a Christian who understands the workaday world in light of what Scripture tells us about life on this planet.

[3 : 51] We are in spiritual warfare, aren't we? And so behind all of these things that we see going on on a human level are spiritual forces at war with one another.

We know that the issue is not in doubt. God is sovereign. He's won the war. And now we're watching these little skirmishes go on, but we know ultimately where the victory lies.

Where does the victory lie with us? Christians will experience the victory, won't we? God will have the victory. He is not at all thwarted or in jeopardy in any way, shape, or form.

Yet we understand that there is this spiritual battle and it's a battle between good and evil, truth and lies. Now, what I'm observing in all of this is that most people involved in these governmental skirmishes right now, these political skirmishes, most people are locked in what I'm seeing as a seesaw effort to gain a better foothold for advancing party politics.

While at the same time, they look across the aisles of both the Congress and the Senate chambers, and what do they see across those aisles?

[5 : 11] The enemy. And that's unfortunate. Because as Christians, we recognize that other people, even when they differ with us, are not the enemy. Their souls held captive in prison by Satan.

They are blinded, as we were spiritually blinded, before we came to faith in Jesus Christ. So, we have no reason to look down our prideful spiritual noses at people who are blinded and imprisoned by sin.

What we do is pray for their souls to be released, their eyes to be enlightened, so that they will come to know the truth of their hope in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That, I'm a preacher of the Gospel. And as happy as I am that President Trump won the election, I'm personally happy about that. And as thrilled as I am with many of the things that he's rapidly doing to make these changes in the name of common sense, I understand that as a Christian, I am not called by God to make America great again.

That's not my mission. And it's not yours either. It's not the mission of Christianity to make America great again. Our mission is spelled out for us in a number of passages, particularly in Matthew 28, where we are told to go into the world preaching and teaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ so that people will be converted from death to life, from sin to freedom from sin, from lies to truth, so that they will live in that forgiveness as we teach them and grow them and baptize them in the name of Jesus to show the world that they are new creatures in Christ.

[6 : 52] That's our calling. And only the hope of the Gospel will deliver our country from the ills that it's in. Now, saying all of that again, this is not an anti-Trump speech. I love Donald Trump.

I pray for Donald Trump. And I'm thankful for what he's doing. It's also, though, not an anti-democratic speech. I'm not up here politicizing the pulpit. I want you to be clear about that.

I have opinions just like you do. I have political opinions just like you do. But my desire now is to help warn you, caution you, and then inform you.

That's what this message is all about. As we think about what we see happening, especially in our country today, I'm going to say more about that as we move through this, and hopefully that will become clearer to you.

caught in the middle of this party political war going on right now, whichever side you happen to be on, caught in the middle are the American people.

[7 : 52] And we have to make a determination about who's telling us the truth. We have to make a determination about what's being said either being helpful or harmful. Short-term, long-term.

Having voiced support for President Trump in what is being heralded as an historic landslide victory, there are a majority of our fellow Americans eagerly awaiting the relief that President Trump promised during his campaign.

So there's this eager anticipation that's built and built and built. And people are looking now and saying, he's going to help us. And boy, I hope he does. Now, look, last week I proposed to you that President Trump's revolution of common sense, that's what he's calling it, his revolution of common sense will only take us so far.

See part one where I talk more about this. Now, while welcomed by many as a refreshing and promising beginning to writing some of the ills of the previous administration, Christians must not fall into the trap of confusing common sense and that common sense agenda with biblical truth.

That may or may not be the case. I gave you examples of that last week. Here is what I'm trying to tell you in a phrase. Common sense is not the gospel.

[9 : 23] And we are called to the gospel. Man's wisdom will not help God's people please Christ in all respects because man's wisdom is fickle.

Sometimes man's wisdom reflects the wisdom of God and sometimes people who do that don't even know they're doing it. And so they give no glory to God in it. When President Trump says there are only two sexes, male and female, he is echoing the truth of whom?

God! God came up with that one. And so we're glad that President Trump echoes that reality. Does President Trump know that's in the scripture?

Could he cite you chapter and verse of where God established that in the word? I don't know. Regardless, that's an example of man's wisdom getting it right in spite of themselves. But who gets the glory for that truth?

God. And this is what we're concerned with. This is what we're concerned with as Christians. We can make America great again and a lot of people can go straight to hell.

[10 : 32] Now you think about that. Christian nationalism is not what we're preaching from this pulpit. Pray for your leaders.

Pray for your president and his cabinet. Pray for God to give them wisdom and success with both God and men. Pray that they will live in integrity. Keep their promises.

Be men of their word. Stand courageously against our enemies. Empower our military forces that when we do call on them to go to war, we will empower them to win that war decisively.

Saving as many of them as we possibly can. Pray in all those ways. Those are the talking points that you hear today and many, many more. You will go on seeing and hearing many players in this little drama playing out before us now and they're going to be offering many perspectives, many personal opinions, taking many actions on both sides of the political fence.

Because, because all of this will affect your daily life concerning your freedoms, concerning your daily life in terms of what goes on in your schools, what goes on in places of worship like this this morning, what affects costs for your goods and services, what affects your businesses, your wages, even your safety.

[12 : 09] You will be exposed to heavy doses of man's wisdom about all of this and I want to help you do two things in light of that. Two things in light of that.

Number one, I want to encourage you to live like God is in control. Because He is. God is in control.

He turns the heart of the King into any direction that He wants. And two, I want to help you to discern our times by applying God's wisdom to what's happening.

I want to help you get behind the rhetoric. Get behind some of the pros and the cons and all of the political diatribe and the fancy talk, even the subterfuge, the obfuscation that comes when people speak.

I want to help you get behind all of that and discern it based on God's wisdom. Folks, I want our congregation to be well, wise, and informed about how to look at these things because you need to be about sharing the gospel and the hope and wisdom of Jesus as you encounter this in your everyday world.

[13 : 22] You're going to encounter it. You're going to have people talk with you about this. You're going to run into people who support the LBG, LGB, XYZ thing.

You're going to run into those. You're going to run into people at your places of business that are transgender. You're going to run into all these people who support DEI.

And I'm telling you, they're having to medicate themselves. They're so depressed that all this stuff's going away. They don't even know how to function anymore because of this. Well, what do we do?

Do we make fun of them? Do we like... Look, I'm as happy as you are that that stuff's dying and going away. Thank the Lord. But we have to remember who we represent, what we stand for, and why we're still breathing on God's planet.

We are Christ in terms of bringing the love of Jesus. We are His body. We are bringing the love of Jesus, the hope of Jesus, the wisdom of Jesus.

[14 : 24] The people who are desperate, they need to hear this. And you know, folks, listen, maybe right now, with all of this stuff going on, all this turmoil going on, we may be in a time unprecedented over the last maybe eight to ten years of being able to get into people in terms of sharing the hope of Jesus with them.

They may be more in tune right now with hearing that than they have been in a decade just because they're grasping at straws.

Well, we have the answer. And we don't need to pretend like we don't. But when we give it, we need to give it in humility. That's what this message is about this morning.

It's about putting a premium on meekness, but not backing off of the wisdom that we have in Jesus. Some of man's wisdom in the form of these arguments and programs, philosophies, some of them sound ridiculous to us.

I mentioned some of them last week, didn't I? But there are also some of them that are camouflaged by Satan to sound very workable.

[15 : 40] They sound utilitarian. They have a ring of usefulness to them that can draw you in if you're not careful. So I want us to be careful.

What we need to do then is this. Christians need to ask why? Why? And then we must answer biblically.

When we run into people who have this differing viewpoint from what we understand Scripture to teach, it would be kind of us if we could graciously say, why?

Why do you believe that? Where does that come from? Where did you, where did you, could I ask you, where did you, can we just sit down right here for a minute? I would love to hear this from you.

Where did you first encounter the idea that you were a woman in a man's body and so you needed to transition from being a man to being a woman because that's who you really are?

[16 : 45] How did you come to that awareness? You see? Ask them. Listen. Listen to them. Let them tell you what happened. Most of them are going to fumble around with that.

You know why? Because it's a lie. There's no such thing as transgenderism, is there? There's no such thing as anybody of any particular biological sex needing to transition to the other sex.

God doesn't make mistakes like that. He made you male or female as a gift of His common grace. It's a lie of Satan and a rebellious heart that wants to throw that off and be something else.

Well, they don't know that. They're blind to that truth. And so, maybe we could enter into a time where we could talk to them about that. Have you ever ran into someone that's homosexual, lesbian?

Have you ever stopped long enough to sit down with them and ask them about that? I have. And it's not an easy conversation to have.

[17 : 54] It's not. It can get kind of messy. But are you willing for it to be messy to offer them the hope of Christ? They're not going to, on the whole, seek you out and ask you to sit down and tell them about Jesus.

You've got to do that. You've got to create that moment. But are you willing to do that? See, these people are not our enemy. Satan is our enemy. We need to win these souls, not marginalize them because we're scared of them because they're weird.

I can tell you before I was saved, if you'd known me, you'd say, that's one weird dude. That's one weird dude.

Why is transgenderism wrong? Why? Why is the LGBTQ agenda wrong?

Why are many of the programs advancing wokeism, critical race theory, white guilt, Black Lives Matter, DEI, and others like this wrong?

[19 : 10] We see President Trump making great strides to wipe that off the map. people who believe that stuff, people who are locked in that stuff, and there are millions of them, they're going to ask questions and say, is there a right?

Because they're saying there's not a right or a wrong in this, there is an is. It just is. And they're going to say, who says that it's wrong?

Who says? Where's that written? Well, we can say the Bible, but can we take them to the Bible and show them? Are we ready to answer these people responsibly, graciously, meekly, humbly, truthfully?

Are we willing and ready to speak the truth in love? This is the pastoral challenge that I'm bringing to all of us as a church family. Look, let me just let the cat out of the bag.

I'm trying to get you ready for war. are you ready to go to jail for what you believe? Are you ready to have hard conversations with people who hate your very being for what you're saying and believing?

[20 : 28] Are you ready to stand firm for Jesus with a smile on your face, joy in your heart, and a loving spirit that says, I'm going to tell you this because I care about your soul.

And I might die and never know whether you came to Christ, but maybe God will use it somewhere down the road long after I'm gone. And if it spares you a devil's hell, I will have done what I could do.

That's where we need to live, isn't it? We need to bring the hope of the gospel. It's fine if you love to argue your politics in ways that are articulate.

Okay, great. But can you do at least as good a job with the gospel? From a heart that's ready to see people come to Christ. Last week, we began this process working through James chapter 3.

That's where we are now. Let me read the passage that we're going to be dealing with. It begins in James 3 verse 13. This is the ground that we covered last Sunday.

[21 : 34] Who among you is wise and understanding. Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. We explained all that.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be prideful, arrogant, and lie against the truth. Because this wisdom that they're boasting about is not that which comes down from heaven.

It is earthly, natural, demonic. for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

And we see that. I took those verses last Sunday and unpacked those doing a verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase exposition of what's going on here with James. We come this morning to verse 17 and 18.

But the wisdom, but contrast, the wisdom from above, God's wisdom, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[22 : 41] And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Now, this passage is going to help us see some important contrast between worldly and heavenly wisdom, between God's truth and demonic lies, which is where James says this man's wisdom comes from.

We're going to outline that for you. I'm trying to help us do this then. Let me put this up here for you. I'm trying to help us measure or evaluate what we see and hear as to its merit, either in biblical wisdom or its malignancy in demonic error.

We don't want to live in the malignant world. We don't want to move, shake, and hear in the malignant world of demonic error. We want to be able to discern that.

We want to live in the merit of biblical wisdom. And so where I started last Sunday was in this first point. It's verse 13 and it reads this way, Who among you is wise and understanding?

Let him show it. If he is, then let him show it. How? By his good behavior with deeds that are done in the gentleness of wisdom. You ought to be able to apply that wisdom in gentleness.

[24 : 07] I talked about this in terms of the question, Who among you is wise and understanding? Who among you is wise and understanding? This is God's baseline for wisdom.

This is his measuring stick. who among you is wise and understanding? Who among you is wise and understanding? Let's set the record straight clarification for God's people.

You'll show God's wisdom in the good deeds that you'll do done in the gentleness of that wisdom. That wisdom will make you gentle in the way that you apply it.

it won't be a hammer or weaponized for your own agenda. You'll remember that you're representing Jesus Christ in this. And so even in your passion, even in your zeal for that truth and for Christ himself and for his righteousness to be safeguarded And heralded!

And exalted! You will do it with a certain gentleness, a propriety, a tempered nature of self-control. This is what James is saying. This is the measure.

[25 : 15] If that's not happening, you may be slipping into this issue of selfish ambition and bitter jealousy. It may be more about you than Christ.

We want to be able to discern that. We want to be able to see that in other people as they step forward. In other words, friends, God's wisdom promotes humility in us and is expressed in meekness.

Meekness. And we took some time last week to really lay this out and what it is. Just in summary form, I can put this here for you. Meekness or gentleness is a powerful force of spiritual resolve in us.

So we can be passionate about this. We can be passionate about what we believe, but that passion is fashioned and controlled by the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit.

It's expressed as meekness or it's expressed as gentleness of Spirit as we apply God's truth, His special revelation, scripture, in our daily lives.

[26 : 22] We're trying to make application of that truth in the gentleness of wisdom, His wisdom. Alright, then we went on and I said this, point number two, worldly wisdom in verses 14 through 16.

13. But, if you have in your heart bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, don't be so prideful.

Don't lie against the truth in that pride. You're not acting in wisdom. This is not about being wise. This is not about you stepping forward to offer something helpful.

Verse 15. This wisdom is not that which comes down from God, from above. It's earthly, natural, demonic. Because where jealousy and selfish ambition like you have in your heart exists, there is only disorder in every evil thing.

Wow. So we talked about in those verses the face of this worldly wisdom. What's it look like? How do you recognize it? How do you know when you'll see it? Well, James describes the character and origins of man's wisdom here, doesn't he?

[27 : 31] In contrast to the heavenly motive of meekness, selfish ambition and bitter jealousy drive worldly wisdom. So we always know what's behind worldly wisdom.

It's a selfishness. It's a raw bitterness. I'll say more about that. Selfish ambition then speaks, this was all last week, speaks of a self-seeking attitude bent on gaining advantage and prestige, prestige for oneself or your group.

You've seen this in the news, you've seen this on television, where one party stands up. These confirmation hearings reveal so much of this where we see people get up there and just grandstand.

you know, I look at them and go, you're not interviewing this person, you're preaching a sermon. You're preaching your political sermon is what you're doing.

And it sounds very selfish, it sounds very bitter, it sounds very edgy, very cut into. And many people have recognized that and called people out for it.

[28 : 45] it's amazing to see this playing out. And I want you to be able to recognize that scripture writes about this. God's wisdom tells us what this is and how to recognize it.

We also talked about its fruit. Its fruit. in verse 16, James tells us that man's wisdom always produces disorder in every evil thing, in every context of life where it's dominant.

And you say, Jeff, are you saying that people cannot come up at all, ever, with anything helpful or productive? No, I'm not saying that. What are you saying? I am talking about the wisdom of man that runs counter, that smacks up against and rebels against God's truth in any form about any issue of life.

That's what I'm talking about. So as President Trump or people on either side of the political aisle come up with helpful ways for us to cut costs as a people, as they try to balance the budget, as they come up with different things that deal with criminality in our nation and try to clean up our streets and safeguard.

Look, they can come up with helpful things, can't they? Some of those things can be helpful. I can tell you one that's not opening our borders to anybody who wants to come in unvetted and releasing literally tens of thousands of criminal element into our society.

[30 : 14] That's not a good call. And you would think that people would be able to recognize that and go, yeah, that's probably not wise. But listen, this is the nature of man's wisdom.

There were lots and lots of people who thought that was a good idea. And they did it. And in that you see the fickleness of common sense.

Because they thought that was common sense, didn't they? You've seen it, you've heard them, they're defending it to this day. To this day.

No. Well, what I'm talking about here is the kind of wisdom that man comes up with that runs counter to God's wisdom in whatever arena of life that's happening in.

Man's wisdom will always lead to disorder in every evil thing in every single context of life where it's dominant as it rebels against the truth of God for holy living.

[31 : 26] Man's wisdom offers us nothing in the way of pleasing Jesus Christ and honoring the Lord. It doesn't. We just read in our call to worship where Paul said that the wisdom of Jesus Christ is foolishness to the world.

It's foolishness. Right? People who rebel against Jesus, people who are blind to their need for the forgiveness of Christ, hate the gospel.

I did at one point in my life. I've told my congregation here many times in my testimony, there was a time in my life while I didn't want to hurt Christians, I just thought they were ridiculous people.

Why would they want to go to a building on Sunday and waste most of one of the two days they have off singing and listening to some guy spit and sputter?

You know? Why would they do that when they could be at the lake skiing like I am right now? They were just ridiculous to me. I didn't get it. I didn't get it at all.

[32 : 35] This is the fruit. Now all of these ills of human wisdom are contrasted with the blessings of God's wisdom and that brings us to this point. Heavenly wisdom.

Thank the Lord. We're in the good territory now. And we'll talk about its faith. How do we recognize this heavenly wisdom beginning in verse 17? But the wisdom from above is first pure.

It's first pure. But the wisdom from above is the phrase that we'll deal with first. Just that little clause there. Now because because there is this ongoing warfare of competing ideologies raised up against God's wisdom and truth, you and I as Christians want to protect ourselves from these deceptive competitors.

And they're out there. So here, look, the first thing that we want to root our hearts in is the origin of true wisdom.

That is biblical, godly, heavenly wisdom. It is from God alone. And you say, Jeff, well, that's just, yeah, but common sense, she said.

[33 : 48] I wasn't going to say that. But it's not. It's not common sense because there was a time in all of our lives when we weren't looking to God for that wisdom, were we?

We were doing it on our own and listening to everything else. No. This wisdom is from God alone. In other words, God is the single source. We can only get this from Christ.

We can only get this. Paul said, He is our wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom in Colossians are in Christ.

Here, I'm quoting from Proverbs. Do I have that up there? Yep. Here, I'm quoting from Proverbs. For the Lord gives wisdom. There it is. From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Period. Period. Here's another one. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him do what?

[34 : 48] Ask of God. Go to the source who gives to all generously and without reproach and it will be given to him.

James 1.5. That's wonderful. What a promise. So friends, listen. As air is to your lungs, God's truth is to your heart.

Without air, you physically wither and you die. Without truth, your heart hardens and you become dead to God. Truth makes your heart beat for God.

God's truth makes your heart beat for God. Another way to say that is God's truth helps you in your devotion. Makes your heart devoted to God.

It draws your heart to God, doesn't it? That's what it does. That's what it's designed to do by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you. He uses his word to draw your heart to him.

[35 : 54] If you've ever been in a dry spell in your life spiritually, you might look on your life and say, you know, I'm just not in the word like I used to be. Or when I am in the word, it's just not as warm and as enlightening as it used to be.

And so you start asking God, is there unconfessed sin in my life? But you start hunting for some of that. Why? Because God's word is designed to help your heart grow and become more devoted in Christ.

So apart from his word, what does your heart begin to do? Do you think it just sits there in neutral waiting for you to put it in drive again? No. it goes into your default.

It goes into reverse. You'll start losing it. You'll start, not your salvation, you'll start losing what you've known.

You'll start beginning to feel a diminishing of your ability to trust the Lord in things. I didn't struggle with that before. You see what I'm saying? So that becomes a warning flag for you to start checking that heart through the word, using God's word, to check that heart.

[37 : 03] The point is, the truth of God, his wisdom makes your heart beat for God. The apostle Paul understood this, taught this.

He understood the vital role that God's truth played in his ministry as an apostle. His entire apostleship was based on bringing the truth of God's word to build up the faith of God's people in that word, through that word, by that word.

I want to show you what Paul said about this. I'm putting it up here just to save time. I'll show you the scripture. It says, a bondservant of God, that really reads slave.

Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of those chosen of God and what? The knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness.

Now, here's what he's saying. No truth, no faith. No truth, no godliness. So, Paul's role was to build up or strengthen the faith, the belief of God's people through the knowledge of God's truth which would then lead to godly living.

[38 : 23] Paul said, I'm all about building up the faith of God's people so that as I give them the knowledge of God's truth, his wisdom, as I impart to them the wisdom of almighty God to build up that belief in God, it will help promote a godly life for them.

Paul said, this is my apostle, this is what I'm about, this is what I do. That's for me, folks, I'm reading this and going, yep, God, that is my entire life.

I say no to many things so that I can stay focused on this and stay available to this. This is what it's about. Just a bit later in Titus, in chapter 2, verse 12, Paul told these same Christians how God's wisdom is the key, the key, the primary element in instructing them in a godly life.

Here's how he said it. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us. That's what it does. It instructs our hearts to do what?

To deny ungodliness and worldly desires. So do you see selfish ambition and bitter jealousy in that? God's word, God's wisdom tells us to deny that, put it off, push it back.

[39 : 46] That's what you used to be. Has no place in your life now. And instead to live, what's the next word? I underline. Wow.

Do you mean God is the one who came up with the idea of living by what is sensible? Yes. Yes. And so who do we give the glory to for that? God. So what are we calling you to?

Gospel sense. Gospel sense is very different from common sense across the spectrum of man's wisdom. You want gospel sense.

You want the wisdom of God working in your heart. Why? Because that's what leads to godliness. That's what helps us live godly in the present age.

Boy, do we need that. That's a powerful, powerful testimony to the wisdom of God helping us to live this sensible, this godly, wise life.

[40 : 46] in Christ Jesus. And we need this. We need this. So God's grace is undeserved favor and forgiveness. And where are we talking about God's grace? We're talking about his undeserved favor.

We don't deserve it. And we're talking about his forgiveness. We don't deserve that. But all of that, according to Paul, has appeared to us and for us, been made available for us.

How? Now, in this wonderful, wonderful grace, it has appeared in his Son, Jesus. Jesus has brought that to us.

Therefore, our saving relationship with Jesus becomes the basis of sensible living. We cannot live this godly, wise, sensible life apart from our salvation in Jesus Christ.

We don't know how to do it. We're captive to man's wisdom. We're trying to make ourselves in our own image. We're not giving glory to the image of God in us.

[41 : 46] You see? And so what we're doing is as God saves us, we turn from that make myself in my own image and we begin to follow the wisdom of God that teaches us to live a sensible, godly, wise life leading to a life of godliness or presenting ourselves in godly behavior.

We showcase the character of Jesus to a world that needs to hear who he is, why he came. This is wonderful.

Folks, look, the sovereign saving grace of God in Jesus Christ who is our wisdom, he's our wisdom, renews and instructs our hearts in holiness, in learning to hate our sin, in putting off our sin, in living to please Jesus.

Where's all that come from? It comes as a gift from God through his grace. God favors us in salvation, he remakes us, we are reborn to be people who want to worship Jesus, who desire Jesus.

I didn't want that before. That was the work of God. What did Paul say? It's all God's doing. It's all God's doing. So it's much more than common sense and it comes only from Jesus.

[43 : 06] Jesus. Now look, let me show you this before I move on. Sensible here from Titus, Titus 2.12, sensible living.

Sensible is the Greek word *sophronos*. *Sophronos*. It has the idea of a sound mind. A sound mind. It means to wisely maintain self-control.

So it's related to the word that James uses in chapter 3 verse 13 when he asks, who among you is wise? The word wise is *sophros*.

So here, Paul is picking up on a similar use, *sophronos*. Now look, here's what John MacArthur said about this. I thought it was very helpful. The Christian who lives sensibly has control over the issues of his life.

the sensible believer does not allow circumstances or the irresponsible influence of others to distract him or affect his own judgment.

[44 : 15] He not only is careful not to become involved in things that are immoral or unspiritual, but also avoids things that are simply trivial and unproductive.

In other words, he brings the unredeemed flesh under control. That whole idea of being under control is the idea of meekness. It's the idea of the gentleness of wisdom.

Wisdom is helping you keep yourself under control, even when you're very passionate about something that's under attack. faith. This is the idea behind this.

Who among you is wise? Who among you is *sophros*? Who among you is under the control of the wisdom of God? This is the test.

So Christians are to have sound minds as it relates to godly thinking and godly living. both of those come by God's truth at work in your heart.

[45 : 22] So this is God's saving grace in Jesus at work in our hearts for truthful, holy, godly, Christ-exalting living. In other words, folks, if you're doing the math with me on this, we can't live any kind of life like that apart from the wisdom of God.

Man's wisdom won't help us live a life like that. Only God's wisdom will do that. You say, Jeff, why is that? Again, I say, because this is about it being based in your salvation.

The grace of God at work in your heart through salvation, through Christ living in you, is what gives you the capacity to live in that kind of wisdom. To be able to gently apply it when people come at you and attack that wisdom and call it ridiculous and stupid and foolish.

When they want to do ridiculous things like put feminine hygiene products in men's bathrooms and you look at it and slap your head and go, what? But then you approach it and you talk to those people and you share the truth and hope of the gospel with them and you live out that wisdom in a spirit of gentleness before them.

Believe me, folks, it's a challenge for me too. I promise you. I've had conversations with people before in the homosexual community that have just taxed every second of my ability to listen to it and stay focused on okay, okay, okay, this is about the gospel, Jeff, this is not about you kind of thing.

[46 : 53] That's hard, isn't it? I'm just being honest. It's very hard. It's very challenging, but you can do it. You can grow into this. Now, to break all of this down for us, James does this.

He begins to detail some aspects of the wisdom from above as that wisdom works into and then works out from our hearts.

God works it into our hearts by grace through faith and then God begins to help us work that wisdom out in good deeds, in the works of the gentleness of wisdom.

That's what he does for us. Notice the verse, but the wisdom, that's another, again, here he is using another word that's in that *sophros* family, *sophia*, but the wisdom from above is first pure, then it's peaceable, then it's gentle, reasonable, full of mercy, and good fruits.

It is unwavering and it is also, finally, without hypocrisy. So, God's wisdom in us is, first of all, notice, pure. It's pure.

[48 : 04] We're still talking about its face. It's recognizing it for what it is. It's pure. So, the idea of first here is the Greek word *protos*. And it has a really rich meaning when you flesh it out.

It means before anything else, we would think that to be first in line is to be before everybody else in line. Yeah, but listen to what else it says. God's wisdom has a purifying effect in us.

Pure is unsullied moral blameless holiness and cleanness in all of this. God's wisdom has a purifying effect. Protos, it is before anything else and it has a purifying effect in us.

It is unsullied moral blameless holiness cleanness. So it's very rich in what he's trying to communicate.

Also remember, remember for James that this wisdom isn't simply wise things that we do. Yes, it's part of that. But it's also what James says, an attitude of the heart.

[49 : 16] An attitude of the heart characterized as meekness, a godly resolve for good and it is controlled and tempered by the Holy Spirit.

I'm just repeating what I had said earlier, just rephrasing it a bit for you. This is what it means to live out of this wisdom that God is building in your heart, teaching you to understand.

So the gentleness or the meekness and purity of God's wisdom become for us heart attitudes. This is part of who you are. It helps define it isn't just something you're doing because we can do this and we can do it hypocritically.

We want this to define who we are, shape who we are, how we understand the way God wants us to live to please Jesus in these matters.

How do I apply wisdom against things that are coming against the truth and people who are espousing them in hateful ways? How do I deal with that? How do I recognize that?

[50 : 22] How do I listen behind the rhetoric to identify what it is that I'm dealing with as a root issue here? Oh yeah, I recognize selfish ambition and bitter jealousy here.

How do I know that? Because I know that what they're espousing is something that brings disorder and promotes every evil thing. Transgenderism is evil, is it not?

Homosexuality is evil, is it not? It's an abomination in the way. Why is D-E-I, why is it evil? Because it's not the answer to racial reconciliation, is it?

It's not. There's nothing equitable about it. There's nothing inclusive about it. When you hear on the news, for example, when you hear on the news, Michael, I'm going to fall out of this thing and it's not his fault.

When you hear on the news that we have an air traffic controller shortage and then you find out in the previous administration that over a thousand applicants to want to be air traffic controllers were turned away because they didn't have the right color skin, we got a problem.

[51 : 40] But listen behind the problem and discern it spiritually. Is there a spiritual component behind that issue? The answer is yes.

Somebody has an agenda. That agenda isn't helping the issue, it's confusing it, compounding it, and actually promoting evil within it. It's putting people in harm's way.

There are spiritual elements behind these things, but the people who are saying these things and doing these, they may not realize that. Do you see that? Are you always aware of when you do wrong that it's wrong?

Have you ever done wrong and gone back and said, oh wait a minute, hello, I can see why that's wrong now. I don't need to do that anymore. But at one time you thought that might be okay.

Right? Well these people don't have the benefit of that kind of wisdom working in their life if they're unbelievers. While they know right from wrong, they don't understand it on a spiritual level.

[52 : 42] They don't. I would pray that President Trump and some of his main cabinet members, and I do pray this, would have Christians that are in proximity in their sphere and that those Christians would have an opportunity to speak into their lives.

You know, whoever that might be and that those Christians would use spiritual wisdom, biblical wisdom to speak into their lives and help them gain a perspective from Scripture, even if the people who are listening to it ultimately are not going to give God the glory for it, what we want in all of this is for truth to prevail.

Truth. Not common sense. Truth. Truth. Because that's what's going to have an effect on people's lives at the deepest level.

By the truth of the Lord is how we understand these things. All right, let's look at its fruit real quick. That's some of its face. We'll do this fairly quickly.

So what we're talking about here is sensible living in Jesus being characterized by James with seven adjectives here. And he just lists them off real quickly and so that's what I'm going to do with you as well.

[54 : 01] Remember, after the sermon at some point, we have some folks that put the sermon notes online for you. So if you go to our site and you click on where the sermon is, there'll be a place that tells you how to access these notes.

And they're all there. So I'm glad you're taking notes, but if you missed this because I go fast, don't sigh at me and moan. All right, you can access them later.

All right, here's the first one. The first one then is peaceable. So your meekness or your humility fosters a willingness to promote well-being between you and others. This is your heart.

This isn't just something that you tick off of a list of good things I did today. This is coming out of who you are. You want to foster and promote well-being in people's lives.

You're committed to that. So you're committed to speak the truth in love. You're committed to be a peaceable person and seek peace. You don't want to fight. fight. Now look, if we have to fight, there's a way to fight like a Christian.

[55 : 09] That's a good title for a sermon coming up. How to fight like a Christian. All right, gentle. Gentle. You're humbly patient. That captures it.

You're humbly patient with people so that you're fair-minded, you're kind, you're considerate when you're confronted with other people's weaknesses and shortcomings and differing opinions.

It doesn't mean you have to receive it or accept it. Look, when I'm talking to people and they're espousing just rank anti-God, anti-truth to me, this is not what I do.

I don't, now I'm a counselor. I make my living listening to people and trying to learn how to answer them, right? I don't do this. This is not me. I'm not shaking my head affirmatively.

I try to be still. and listen to them. And if they hit something and I want to register, I might go just enough to let them know that one went sideways on me.

[56 : 12] And probably they're going to want to come back to that and that's exactly what I want them to do. Look, you're the Christian in the room, so you need to be willing to be the voice and heart of Christ in the room.

You can't depend on unbelievers to make it about the gospel. Why would they do that? That's your responsibility in love and in the wisdom of Christ.

So let's speak up. Let's speak up for Jesus. All right? I said I'd do this quickly and I'm not. Reasonable. Reasonable. In a word, if I had to distill this down, teachable.

Oh, this is such a huge trait. So this is what we've made no secret of this. Greg and I, as we think about and pray about future leaders in our church, and we have a few men right now who are on the short list for that, one of the things that we look for first in these men is teachableness.

Are they teachable? Are these men willing to be taught or do they already know everything or most? Yeah, we look for that.

[57 : 32] We listen for that. We watch that. Also, humility because those two go hand in glove. Humility and a teachable spirit. So these are people who are open to reason.

They're receptive. They're even willing to defer their view and even change their view. If they're confronted with a sufficient reason or evidence to do so, that would be biblically speaking.

Then I want you to notice a modifier next. For the next two traits, we have this modifier before them, full of. Full of. It means complete and to the full extent in every particular and to every degree.

Wow. Okay. So we are to be complete and full to the extent of every particular and degree in terms of mercy.

We are to be full of mercy. That means full of compassion. Complete with compassion. Willingness to help those in need. Even those who wrong us.

[58 : 43] saved. The reason that I put Jesus saved sinners up here is I want to remind us that Jesus came to save you at your worst. Jesus came to save you when you were hating him and you were anti-God and anti-gospel and doing your own thing.

And Jesus saved you. If you're like my wife, Suzanne, and you were saved at a young age, you know, she was saved I think six or seven or something like that, six, seven, eight. She just needed a little more time for all of that to come out.

It would have come out, right? Yeah, yeah. So as a little girl, did she get to see what it was like to be 20 and living against the Lord? So you get more sophisticated in living against the Lord as you get older.

Because you think you know it all. At six years old you think you know it all, but you don't know that you think you know it all. You just act like it. But you get more sophisticated, right?

You're easy to trick and trap when you're six. Not so much when you get 20. So at 20 I was acting out in ways that I didn't at six years old. Nevertheless, we're still sinners at heart and God still needs to come and save us in terms of our rebellion against Him, right?

[59 : 56] A six-year-old has a rebellious heart. Any of you have six-year-olds you know what I'm talking about. That's the truth of it. So full of mercy. How about full of good fruits?

These are simply good deeds. You are eager and you look for opportunities to do good in Jesus' name. And then you're unwavering. You're not wishy-washy. You're steady-minded and impartial.

This steady-mindedness is so important as a concept. You don't play favorites. You don't do what is expedient in the moment for selfish gain or to make yourself look good.

This is not about you looking good. So you've got to get over your fear of man. I'm afraid what people will think of me. I need everybody's approval. No. And then finally, without hypocrisy, without show or pretense.

This isn't your show. This is about being genuine and sincere. And this comes from your heart. And then finally, in verse 18, Now, folks, this sums up James' contrast of worldly and heavenly wisdom.

[61 : 13] In other words, godly wisdom bears the fruit of righteous living. That's just a product. That's what it will do. If it's planted and cultivated the way that we need to, it will bear righteous living.

That is, I'm right in God's eyes kind of living. I want to please Him. Living rightly before the Lord allows for a harvest of harmony and unity by those who are committed to being peacemakers.

So I say this, look, will common sense bring us together? Possibly. Will it keep us together? No. We will experience Christian unity at Grace Church as we all get on the page of loving Jesus, living in His wisdom, speaking the truth in love because of what that does.

It brings forward as we sow those seeds, that's what He's talking about here, it's the metaphor, as we sow those seeds of God's wisdom in each other's hearts, as we speak the truth in love and we're committed to God's way at Grace Church, what happens?

We enjoy then a harvest of harmony and unity. In other words, the truth, while it divides people who don't want to submit to it, who are not humble and teachable, it brings together God's people when they want to use that truth to please Christ.

[62 : 32] It's love for Jesus that puts us on the same page and brings us into harmony so that we're singing that truth to Jesus, we're praying that truth to Jesus, we're preaching it, teaching it, and seeking to live it.

that takes black people and white people and purple people, that takes people from Poland and people from wherever and brings them together in Christ Jesus through language barriers and everything else and helps them to realize we are all made blood kin in the blood of Christ.

That's what brings people together. So common sense might bring us together but it won't keep us together. When the persecution hits, we need people committed to the truth and committed to love Christ in that persecution.

That takes us deeper into our commitment to Christ. Let me tell you just a couple of other things as I move to close it out. Listen to this now. Ideologies, I've used that word a number of times last week and today.

What are ideologies? Ideologies are belief systems. They're belief systems. They are the ideas supporting and defining systems of belief that people have.

[63 : 46] So the Apostle Paul, I want you to see this up here, the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church that spiritual warfare is not waged according to the flesh.

So we don't use fleshly weapons in spiritual warfare. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but they are divinely powerful for the destruction of spiritual fortresses, we could put there.

We are destroying speculations. We are destroying every single lofty thing raised up against Jeff Jackson and his personal opinions. No.

Raised up against the knowledge of God. And we are taking every thought captive. To whom? To the obedience of Jesus Christ.

That's the goal. The people are not our enemies, they're our mission field. We are fighting against the philosophies and speculations and the lofty things that are raised up against the knowledge of God.

[64 : 49] That's what the LGBTQ movement is. It is a movement raised up against the knowledge of God, is it not? So they need to be concerned that it's not that I disagree with them that's the issue, is it?

Ultimately, who disagrees with them? Who's going to judge them? Me? God? Right? They're not going to get to heaven and find me standing there going, told you so. Told you.

No. I'm going to be the one in heaven also going, yes Lord, I know, I know, that was not helpful, was it? That's going to burn up, so that's wood, hay, and stubble. But this and this, this was what I did for Christ, and this is what I did in the name of the Lord for his glory and goodness, and I'm so glad that's diamonds and jewels and precious gems to you.

Thank the Lord. That's going to be me. No judgment. What I don't want to hear for those people is depart from me, I never knew you. I don't want that for anybody.

For the people on this planet who've been the worst to me in my life, I don't want their souls in hell. I don't. We are warring against spiritual forces.

[66 : 06] So this is a warfare on an ideological level. It's a battle for the mind. It's a battle for the beliefs that define and drive the way you live.

Invariably, all ideological systems based on man's wisdom and raised up against or are counter to the knowledge and wisdom and truth of God will be characterized by disorder, confusion and sin.

Every time. As God's people, we have to build our lives on God's truth and Jesus. We have to understand the times. We have to measure all of this according to what is sensible, defined by God's wisdom.

So, look, what is the origin of any policy, philosophy, belief system or methodology which is anti-God and anti-truth?

What's the answer according to James? The origin is demonic. Isn't that what he said? It's worldly and fleshly.

[67 : 07] Again, if you want to know more about what those mean, see last week's sermon. I unpacked those in detail. What is the product of any of these ideologies and philosophies which are raised up against the knowledge of God?

What's the product? Disorder, confusion and perversion are every evil thing. So, these social experiments and ideologies, they served to weaken us and more deeply divide us as a nation.

They didn't bring us together because it's not truth. It made a lot of sense to a lot of people, but it wasn't truth. So, these ideologies, friends, they're more than political expressions of liberal progressives or left-leaning democrats.

They are anti-God expression of worldly wisdom. That's why they're wrong. Because they counter God. Not simply because they don't make sense.

It's more than that. It is that, but it's more than that. And now let me ask you, let me ask you, why is a revolution of common sense not going to bring us the spiritual revival we truly need as a nation?

[68 : 15] Answer. Because common sense is not the power of the gospel to change a person's heart or to bring them to faith and forgiveness in Jesus. So, as God's people, our answers and solutions to these wrongs and others, they need to reflect God's wisdom and truth and they need to bring much honor and glory to Jesus.

Not to my ability to out-argue the person. God's wisdom is the way of hope, true freedom. God's wisdom is the way of true forgiveness, peace, unity.

I said to you before, common sense might prove useful in beginning to bring us together, but common sense is not God's answer to keep us together, particularly as God's people. Are we thankful for people applying common sense to issues that help dispel lies?

Yes. And we want to pray for God to use that. But it's the gospel, it's the truth of God in Jesus revealed to us as God's will in the Bible, in Scripture, that will keep us quote, diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

That's Ephesians 4.3. In other words, it's God's truth in Christ which God uses to bring us together, to keep us together, and to keep us on mission, on point, for the greater glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[69 : 42] And that's what we want to be concerned with, that's what we want to give our hearts and our lives to. Amen. So I hope that you're blessed in this message in terms of its ability to help us from the Apostle James to better discern heavenly wisdom and worldly wisdom, and that we're to apply that in a spirit of gentleness and meekness.

And that becomes the test of that wisdom working in my life to change me before I try to work it in somebody else or see it at work.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you so much for these people who are so carefully attentive to my preaching and the offering that I make to you each Sunday as I try to bring an exposition of the word.

I thank you, God, that they're patient with me. They pray for me. I thank you that they listen well and they've taught themselves how to be disciplined in listening.

They take notes. I'm just so grateful as I see this happening because I see that they want the word. They want the truth and they want to please you and live for you. So I ask you to forgive us as a body.

[70 : 56] Please forgive us in ways that we have not honored and exalted Jesus this past week. And I pray that by the throne of grace you would teach us to be peacemakers.

You would teach us to be people who gently speak the truth in love, especially toward those who are mean-spirited toward us. People captured by Satan and taken into blindness against the truth of the gospel.

Help us to be used by you, God, to do that. We continue to pray for your grace and mercy on our church family as we heal from physical sickness. And we ask for your grace and mercy on Bob and Camille as they continue to face off with this disease that will take Bob's life.

In your timing and by your love and kindness, I pray that you will help us to be a church family to them and to stand by their side. We pray all of this as we bear their burdens in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.