

May 23, 2021

## Am I a Servant of God

***"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom...the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:13-18***

In today's context James calls us to live "...*the wisdom that comes from heaven...*" before a lost world. Our example before others in what we say and in what we do is the call every servant of God receives. We are called to be the "*light of the world*" and our lives either fulfill that call or deny it completely.

So how do we know if we are living out that call? James would use nearly the same phrasing that the Apostle Paul uses to describe our lives when we miss the mark. He writes, "***But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.***"

In the same vein, Paul would write to the believers in Philippi, "***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves...***" (Philippians 2:3-4) In both cases the choice we constantly face is being made clear in that each of us is either humbly choosing selfless service to others or in our vain conceit, pursuing our own self-serving ways.

Selfless service reflects Godly wisdom and selfish ambition that constantly demands its own way is "...*of the devil...*" How do we know when we are being motivated by or participating in bitter envy or selfish ambition? James would identify disorder and every evil practice as the outcomes associated with envy and selfish ambition. In contrast he tells us that the outcome of living a life of humble service will be "...*pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*"

So, our task as believers is to constantly test the products of our own behaviors. We will either be selfishly creating disorder and participating with evil or, we will be humbly sowing peace. We cannot be or do both. Jesus would teach, "***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.***" (Matthew 5:9)

But how do we sow peace? It begins, James will teach us, with our obedience to Paul's command; "***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility...***" Our purity begins, as we have often noted, with our sacrifice of self on the cross. Humility demands an emptied self. Paul's "...*selfish ambition or vain conceit...*" are the product of our own arrogant selfishness and absolutely preclude humility.

When we, in the humility of an emptied self, surrender our broken lives to God we will naturally become "...*peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*" A selfish life produces disorder, division, and evil. A selfish life produces peace.

In every way the products of our lives day by day demonstrate whose wisdom shapes us. The lives of God's servants will always foster peace and the lives of those who belong to Satan will always foster disorder and division. We can and must, I believe, constantly measure our own lives

against this standard of conduct. The answer to James' question, "*Who is wise and understanding among you?*" will always be made obvious in the lives we lead.

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