

**Friends of the World**  
**James 3:13-4:10**  
**September 22, 2024**

How does James begin the text we have for today? He asks the question, “Who is wise and understanding among you”? When you hear that, when you read that, what does it say to you? What is he asking you? Are you wise? Wise, we think we have some wisdom, we know much and yet as we all know wisdom is not knowing but is putting that knowledge to work, to put it into a life lived to its best.

He then talks of good conduct and showing works in the meekness of that wisdom. It is almost as if the two shouldn't be in the same sentence. Meekness and wisdom, it is so contrary to what we see out there. We see so much boasting in wisdom of taking advantage of that wisdom to see how a person can get ahead, too many times at someone else's expense. It is that wisdom that doesn't come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

How did James know what it was going to be like in today's world? You mean to tell me that it was that way in Jame's world too? Has it always been that way since that day in the garden?

It must have been. What do we see happening after that terrible day, the day the world was changed from perfect to very imperfect? We have the relationship between the first man and woman, yielding two sons. One was a farmer and the other was a shepherd or rancher. They were both given different gifts, gifts to be used for the feeding of the family, of enjoying hard work and life and yet one saw the world differently. He was jealous of his brother. He wanted something more, something that was not part of who he was to be, of how he was to give thanks to God for what he had been given.

Cain didn't know about murder. He had never seen it on TV. He had never been in a war as we assume he was the first. We assume he was the first to have a brother and he would be the first to see his brother, lying there on the ground, lifeless and him wondering what God was going to do to him, let alone his Mom and Dad.

What happened to him was not what we would have thought. No, we would have thought that God would have taken His life as later on, the Lord laid down the Law with Moses where He said, *Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. Leviticus 24:17.*

Did God change His mind? No, He showed mercy. He gave Cain another chance at life. He allowed this murderer to live, even though later He would have Moses see the importance of life, life of humans and if you were to continue on in the next verse of Leviticus, the life of human's property, of human's animals.

James is writing to point out the importance of a well lived life and that it isn't a life that is lived according to the world around him or us. Yes, I know we have to make a living for us and our families but is life what the world says is a "good" life or is it what the Lord has in mind for a good life?

That is what we deal with, isn't it? Some of you may remember back to the day when the world around you was smaller. On the farm we had a radio but didn't have a TV for many years. We heard some news but our world consisted of the farm and maybe those who showed up there and whatever we read in the newspaper. Now we get a play by play of so many people's lives with social media and the latest news, 24 hours a day bringing the lives of so many right to our living rooms.

We have all these temptations around us. The devil uses all sorts of things that the Lord has meant for good to be used for bad and even demonic. We see the evil and the vile practice all too often. You may have even lived through some of it and yet you have a wisdom, not of the earth but have been blessed with wisdom from above. This wisdom is, as James points out, wisdom that is at first peace, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. He equates all of this to a harvest of righteousness.

Doesn't that sound great, a harvest of righteousness? Yes, this time of year there is all sorts of harvesting going on. Gardens are yielding their abundance. Ranchers are pulling off the calves and getting them ready to be shipped off to new places to put on weight so that we can enjoy a good steak or even a good burger.

All sorts of time and effort go into a harvest this is what James is talking about too. It is an effort on the part of Christians to look to that harvest, that harvest that yields peace, not only in this life but also the peace that Christ provides as He is the one who went to the cross to suffer and die for those times when our conduct is so good, times when we sought to be friends with the world at the expense of being friends with Him.

Yes, sorry to say, too many times we seek friendship with the world. We want to be friends with those around us, don't we? Sure we do. But too many times the world sees friendship with it as not only recognizing, acknowledging them but then going the

next step and that is approving of their beliefs and actions. It is as Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans 1:27* *Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

How easy it is to not say anything, to not even get a scowl on our faces when we come in contact with the world around us. We think we won't bring it up as we think it will only cause hard feelings. But is there a way to bring it up in love? Yes, I know they still won't take it that well as we too don't like to have someone tells us we have thought or done something that is against what God would consider good.

There is a reason James closes this text with verse 10: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you. The problem is the world around us thinks along the line of a country song: "It is hard to be humble when you are perfect in every way".

What does that line tell you? It tells you that the person who believes that or even sees themselves as good has a problem. The problem is that they are judging themselves on their own scale and not on the scale of the Lord. *Matthew 5:48* *"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Jesus made this statement after He talked of loving your neighbor which included even enemies.

Jesus confronted many in His life. The Pharisees and the Scribes thought He was falling into the sin of being a friend of the world. He was associating with prostitutes, of tax collectors and even those Gentile unbelievers. You have all heard how you should avoid those who might lead you down the wrong path in life. You probably were warned about those you shouldn't associate with. If you hang around those who are doing things not too good, their dirt might just rub off on you or something like it. You want to brave that dirt though to befriend them and tell them and show them of Jesus.

The devil is out there to entice you to be friends. Friends are good but too many times friends can lead astray. Think about it. Even you may have not thought to do something not so good, what happens when a "friend" helps you along. Oh, as you grow older, that friend might not have even directly enticed you but having them as a friend, their way of life is like those Jesus associated with but then as a friend, you **don't** point out their inconsistencies with God and His Word. *Romans 2: 14-16* *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting*

*thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

Jesus is coming again and He will judge those who do not believe. Paul makes it plain in this text from Romans that everyone has the Law written on their hearts. They know right from wrong. Those who do not believe need to understand that they are at odds with God and the Law He has placed in their hearts and ours.

How are we to deal with the world that seeks the right kind of friends, true friends who will confront with the truth? We know that that Jesus' words are truth. It is that truth that is offensive to those who seek their own truth as especially it is they who they consider themselves to be their own savior. "If it is to be, it is up to me" is how they see it.

You have another belief and that is if it is to be then it is up to the Lord. Yes, as we look to the world around us, our everyday lives, we say the Lord is in charge and yet is He in charge of your lives or are you holding out a little? Are you jealous of the world or of others in your world? Are their lives, their possessions, their jobs, their health, their youth causing you to not open your mouth, to not pray for them and then for yourselves to look to the Holy Spirit that lives in you to direct your everyday life?

Paul wrote on this to the *Galatians: 5:17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

James understood that what goes on is not just the world around you but is of the devil. It is as Paul wrote to the *Ephesians: 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

James understood it. Paul understood it. We need to understand it and be in prayer for those we are friends with. We need to care for them so much that we will help them to understand where they are headed. We know that a life lived to the Lord has its rewards as well as challenges especially the challenge of being friends of the world, a world that has so many enticing things that would take us away from the Lord.

Friendship with the world is enmity with God is how James put it. He didn't have the amount of enticements we have and he didn't have the freedom we have to be Christians. Since we have such a great gift, may the Lord answer our prayers and work as we humble ourselves before Him asking Him to do His work in and through us.