

## Heavenly Wisdom

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie St., London, on Thursday Evening, August 13, 1846

"But the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full, of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."  
James 3:17

The drift of the General Epistle of James has, I think, been much misunderstood. Isolated passages have been laid hold of by persons of a legal bias to prop up that God-dishonouring doctrine—*salvation by works*; whilst others who love and contend for free grace, have been so puzzled by the very same passages that legalists have laid hold of, that they have been unable to reconcile them to the express testimony of the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul to the doctrine of *justification by faith*. We have a signal instance of this in Luther, who, at an early period of his life, was so stumbled by certain passages in this epistle that he actually cast it out of the canon of Scripture; in other words, denied its divine inspiration.

I think, however, it is very evident that the drift of James is not for a moment to set up, 'justification by works,' in opposition to that cardinal, fundamental point, justification by faith through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. But, as there were many base characters in his day (as is evident from the Second Epistle of Peter and that of Jude) who "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness," and "continued in sin that grace might abound," James writes this epistle to warn them against such soul-deceiving errors; and to shew that the faith whereby the soul is justified is of that living nature whence good works must necessarily flow. He

therefore speaks of justification by works (2:24), not as a sinner's righteousness before God, nor as contradictory to, or destructive of, the doctrine of justification by faith, but as a proof and evidence of faith being genuine. Thus the Lord represents the judgment of the great day as decided by works (Matt. 25:31-46), not because the blessed are saved by their works, for "the kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world," but because their works were proofs and evidences that their faith and love were genuine.

That this is the meaning of James is, to my mind evident from two instances which he brings forward of the works, the good works, whereby two Old Testament believers were, according to him, justified, namely Abraham and Rahab. The very works which he brings forward as justifying the performers of them would be separated from that faith which produced them, in one case treason, and in the other murder. For does not James bring forth the case of Rahab the harlot who received the spies? "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (Jas. 2:25.) Isolate that case from the faith whence it sprang, was not Rahab guilty of treachery and treason against her country? And look also at Abraham's case, which he quotes. (2:21.) "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Isolate Abraham's offering up of his son from the faith which produced it—what would it be but the blackest murder, the cold-blooded slaughter of an only son by the hand of his own parent? James, therefore, in adducing these instances, brings them forward as fruits of living faith. For take these works in any other light than the fruits of living faith, and they are stamped as the blackest crimes. But springing out of faith their evil is taken away. Grace sanctifies them; and they are manifestations and fruits of the operation of faith in the soul.

As he himself says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God." (Jas. 2:22, 23.) He here brings forward the very same passage which Paul does to prove "justification by faith." (Rom. 4:3.)

But, apart from these controverted passages, there are two places especially in James's Epistle, which cut down the unscriptural doctrine of 'salvation by works.' One is, the passage wherein he declares, that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (1:17.) Now, if it be true, that there is no good and no perfect gift but what cometh down from the Father of lights, what room is there for the works of the flesh? All creature merit is cut down effectually by such a solemn declaration of inspired truth. And the other passage, whereby all works are effectually swept away as regards justification, is the one before us, "The wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

James is here contrasting the wisdom which cometh from God with the wisdom which cometh from man. What is the decisive stamp which this great Apostle puts upon all human wisdom? He writes upon it three epithets as its distinctive marks; and thus condemns it to the lowest depth of abasement. Speaking of that vain-jangling profession which arises from an unhumiliated heart and an unbridled tongue, he says, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

(James 3:14, 15.) *First*, then, this wisdom which springs from the creature and the flesh has its origin in the earth; and above that earth whence it has its source it can never rise. It must always, therefore, being earth-born, grovel on the ground; out of the earth it grows, and it can never rise above the mists and fogs which cover its native soil. *Secondly*, it is "*sensual*," or "*natural*," as we read in the margin. Thus, it is a wisdom adapted to our fallen nature; a wisdom which addresses itself entirely to our senses. It knows nothing of God, nothing of heavenly things, nothing of eternal realities, nothing of supernatural and revealed truth; but flows out of and is adapted to reason and sense, knowing only such objects as eye, ear, touch, taste, and smell are cognizant of, and conversant with. It is a wisdom, therefore, which begins in self, and ends in self, and never rises beyond the fallen nature of ruined man. And *thirdly*, comes that word which debases and degrades all human wisdom, in the matter of salvation, to the lowest hell. By one word he puts upon it a fatal stamp, as though he would entirely reprobate it—"*devilish*." It seems as though he would say, 'Man, with all his boasted wisdom, is even exceeded by devils in that matter. The fallen spirits, those enemies of God and his people, who are waging eternal war against God and his dear Son, are the parents of that wisdom which is earthly and sensual; and thus are stamped upon it the very features of hell.' But bear in mind, that these epithets are applicable to human wisdom only so far as it interferes with divine matters. In its own province, human wisdom is useful and necessary. It is when it intrudes itself into divine things, and makes a bold entry into the sanctuary, bringing down sacred and heavenly realities to its own level, that it is to be condemned. James saw the fruits which it produces when carried into divine things; he therefore judged of it by these fruits, and condemned it accordingly. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of

a good conservation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:13-16.) It is because he saw that the carrying of natural wisdom into divine things produced such miserable fruits that he condemned it. He perceived that it produced bitter envying, strife, vain glory, lying against the truth, confusion, and every evil work; and therefore condemned its origin as *earthly*, its nature as *sensual*, and its end as *devilish*.

But having thus set aside all claims of human wisdom in matters relating to the kingdom of God, James proceeds in a simple and blessed way to unfold the character of that divine and supernatural wisdom, which has not its origin like human wisdom in the earth, but comes from above, and leads to that heaven whence it springs.

With God's blessing, then, this evening, I shall endeavour to show the *origin, nature, and effects* of this divine and supernatural wisdom; and, in so doing, I shall take up one by one the epithets by which James has here described it. May the Lord enable those of us who desire to fear his Name to gather up some sweet testimony from himself, that he has made us the happy partakers of this heavenly wisdom.

I.—"*The wisdom which is from above.*" Its origin is here distinctly stated. It is no denizen of earth; its abode is in heaven; and it comes down as a spiritual visitant from on high. Man, then, in a state of nature, has not a grain of heavenly wisdom. He knows experimentally nothing of the way of salvation, nothing of his own ruin and misery, nothing of the grace of God, nothing of the Person and operations of

the Lord the Comforter; nothing of his leadings, guidings, teachings, and anointings. He may indeed possess a large amount of earthly wisdom; and if a professor of religion, he may carry it up to the greatest height in the letter of truth; he may be wise in the Scriptures, wise in the plan of salvation, wise in comparing text with text, Scripture with Scripture, and passage with passage; but unless a measure of divine wisdom has dropped into his heart from the mouth of God, he has at present nothing but that wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish." But the wisdom which makes the soul wise unto salvation is "from above." It flows from the fulness of Jesus; for "of God he is made unto us *wisdom*." It comes immediately from the mouth of God into the soul. "The Lord giveth wisdom. Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:6.) It springs from the special teachings of God the Spirit; "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." (Isa. 54:13.) It proceeds from the sacred and secret operations of the holy Comforter in the hearts of God's elect. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John 2:20.) "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come."

This, then, is its *origin*. It comes from heaven; it is the free gift of God to elect souls, and it is sent to make them wise unto salvation, to deliver them from the wrath to come, to fit them for and take them to heaven. Of the *nature* of this wisdom James proceeds to give us a description.

1. First he says of it, that it is "*pure*." It is thus opposed to earthly wisdom, which is "sensual and devilish." Heavenly wisdom we have seen to be pure in its origin. It comes down from the all-pure Jehovah; it descends from the eternal

mansions of unsullied holiness. This John saw in vision. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1.) *There* was its source; *thence* it took its rise. "The throne of God and of the Lamb" was the fountain-head whence this "pure river of water of life" flowed. Ezekiel too saw this same heavenly river in vision. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." (Ezek. 47:1.) This gives us an additional view of the nature of this divine stream, that whereas John saw it proceeding out of "the throne of God and of the Lamb," Ezekiel viewed it taking its course by the altar, and therefore connected with, and flowing out of the atoning sacrifice of Immanuel.

But this wisdom is not only pure in its origin, it is also pure in its nature. It is as pure as the throne of God out of which it flows; it is as spotless as his eternal holiness, as unsullied as his immaculate Godhead. It cannot be otherwise. A pure Jehovah can communicate nothing but what is as pure as himself. And thus this heavenly wisdom that springs out of a covenant Jehovah flows purely into the soul, because it proceeds out of the pure and holy fountain of Immanuel's fulness.

And as it is pure in its *origin*, and pure in its *nature*, so is it also pure in its *effects*. It comes accompanied by atoning blood, and therefore purifies the conscience; as we read, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge

your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:13, 14.) This is "having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22.) It comes with—in fact, it is—the pouring out of the blessed Spirit upon the soul; therefore it purifies the heart and affections, as the Holy Ghost declares by the mouth of Peter, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) It brings with it *health*, for it is "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones" (Prov. 3:8); it gives *strength*, for "the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9); it communicates *grace*, for it is "an ornament of grace to the head" (Prov. 1:9); and crowns all with *glory*, "for the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psa. 84:11.)

Being thus pure in its *origin*, pure in its *nature*, and pure in its *effects*, it is not sullied by the corruptions of the heart into which it comes, though it discovers and brings them to light. This wisdom is "the light of life" (John 8:12); and therefore discovers all upon which it shines. Thus it makes sin known and felt; as the Apostle speaks, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.) And this is the reason why the Lord's people have such a sight and sense of their inward corruptions, are so plagued with "the sin that dwelleth in them," and pour forth so many sighs and cries on account of their internal wickedness. Divine teaching makes them acquainted with themselves; and the pure wisdom which is from above manifests the filth and impurity of their fallen nature. And what is true of divine wisdom as a whole is true also of all its branches. Thus faith discovers unbelief; light, darkness; life, deadness; liberty, bondage; purity, holiness; and unsullied brightness discovers filth, carnality,



and wickedness. And as this heavenly wisdom in the soul is not an inert, inactive, barren principle, but the life of God in active, fruitful operation, it not only discovers, but resists, struggles against, condemns, and subdues, as the Lord from time to time enables, the corruptions that are by it manifested and groaned under.

II.—The second mark that the blessed Spirit, by the pen of James, has stamped upon this heavenly wisdom is, that it is "*peaceable*." Its first mark is, "*purity*;" its second, *peace*. But in what way is it *peaceable*? It is so in its *origin*. It dates its birth from eternal transactions. Do we not read, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both?" (Zech. 6:13.) From this "counsel" (or covenant) of peace heavenly wisdom, as a gift to the church, took its rise. But what originated in the counsels of eternity was accomplished and ratified in time by the incarnation of the Son of God: for Jesus "made peace by the blood of his cross." (Col. 1:20.) He reconciled the elect unto God: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight." (Col. 1:21, 22.) He brought them near unto his Father by making an atonement for their sins, and has thus cast all their iniquities into the depth of the sea. And is he not the peace-maker? (Eph. 2:15); the peace-speaker? (Eph. 2:17); the peace-giver? (John 14:27.) "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land." (Micah 5:5.) "He," says the Apostle, "is our peace." (Eph. 2:14.) Therefore, the wisdom which is from above is "peaceable," because it flows out of the "counsel of peace" entered into between the Eternal Three, and because it was brought to light and ratified in the fulness of time by the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, blood and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore sent down from on high as a sweet and

sure message of peace to the soul; and wherever it comes, it proclaims peace to the guilty conscience, for it assures the soul into which it divinely flows that peace has been made through the blood of the Mediator.

But this heavenly wisdom is not only "peaceable" in its *origin*, and *nature*, it is "peaceable" also in its *effects*. It produces a sense of peace by enabling the soul to believe that Jesus has made peace. When the blessed Spirit is pleased to bring a measure of this heavenly wisdom into the heart, peace with God through Jesus Christ is felt and experienced; as the Apostle says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) As the effect of peace thus made and proclaimed, it also produces *quietness*; as we read, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. 32:17.) It is, therefore, accompanied with that spiritual mindedness which is "life and peace." Thus it pours oil upon the troubled waves and heaving billows of a sinner's breast; it assuages the pangs of guilt; it disarms the rebellion of the carnal mind against God; it allays the peevishness and fretfulness of man's stubborn will against the sovereign dispensations of the Most High, and hushes every faculty of the soul into a sacred and solemn calm. What then so sweet, or what so desirable, as to be blessed with a measure of this peace with God; and to enjoy the dewy operations and influences of the Holy Spirit, producing a holy, heavenly calm in the troubled breast!

But this heavenly wisdom is "peaceable" also in its *fruits*. What is most opposite to God? Is it not enmity? "For God is love." And is not "the carnal mind enmity against God?" Then that which is most opposed to the character of God must be enmity, hatred, wrath, malice, strife, envy. The very nature

of devils—that which makes hell to be hell—which inflames their tortured spirits as well as those billows of divine wrath that are perpetually rolling over them in waves of fire and brimstone—the internal hell, that devils and damned spirits carry within their own breasts, is hatred and enmity against God and his ways. And have we not felt, to our shame, a measure, some perhaps a large measure, of this hell within, this enmity, this rebellion, this peevishness, this fretfulness, this quarrelling with God, his works, his word, and his ways? And have not our souls sometimes also enjoyed a measure of the Spirit's divine operations, communications, dew, and power? And was not the effect this? to command a holy calm, to produce peace with God and peace with his people? For wherever the holy Dove broods over the soul, wherever he waves his blessed pinions over a sinner's heart, wherever he speaks through the blood of the cross, he also creates peace with the people of God. When the shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, and an angelic chorus hovered over their heads, this was the burden of their song, "Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace*, goodwill toward men." O how different is this peace on earth thus proclaimed by the angelic host at the time of the Lord's nativity, from a state of war, where wrath, enmity, jealousy, pride, and rebellion are all mustering their hostile bands to desolate and destroy! Peace is heaven; wrath, enmity, and rebellion are hell. Peace is from God; war is from Satan. Peace flows like a river from the blissful abodes of happiness and glory; war is a troubled sea, whose waves cast up mire and dirt.

III.—"*Gentle*." How is this wisdom "gentle?" By making that heart "gentle" into which it comes. And what is "gentle" opposed to? Self-will, passion, fretfulness, peevishness, and the workings of a rebellious heart. "Gentle" is opposed to everything headstrong, perverse, froward, stubborn, obstinate. If we look at the *origin* and *Author* of this heavenly

wisdom, it must needs be "gentle." The heavenly Dove can only breathe his own nature, his own spirit, which is gentleness, quietness, meekness, calmness. O how this gentleness and meekness shone forth in the character of the blessed Lord! "Learn of me," he said, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. 11:29.) It was said of him, that "he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." (Isa. 42:2.) "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (53:7.) But how opposed is this "meekness of wisdom," this "meek and quiet spirit," this "gentleness of Christ" to the very nature of man! This is man's nature—to have some point in view, some darling lust, some pitiful self-interest, some object of pride or ambition; and in the hot and eager pursuit of this, to press hurriedly forward, to trample down every obstacle, and to carry all before him. Self is his motive, his starting place, and his goal. Has he then some desired object in view? Are his appetites inflamed towards it? Does his hand long to grasp it? But is there a crowd of obstacles between him and it? Trample them under foot; push them on the right hand and on the left; have it he must, have it he will. Does any man oppose? Down with him into the dust. Does any man thwart? Woe to him who crosses his path. Is not this man's disposition by nature? And is not this the very wisdom of hell? that wisdom which James declares to be "earthly, sensual, devilish?" Now look in the opposite direction, at the wisdom in the heart made wise unto salvation; its very essence, its very nature is to be "gentle;" not *unfaithful*, that is quite another thing. Men often mistake the matter both ways. Violence, wrath, anger, are called faithfulness; cowardness in divine matters, a truckling, yielding, timid spirit, sacrificing truth, and uprightness at the shrine of expediency and self-interest, a cowering before money and power—this is loudly proclaimed by those who reap the benefits of such courtly adulation to be the very spirit of the

gospel and the very gentleness of Christ himself. But no two errors can be greater. The highest gentleness may be consistent with the deepest faithfulness; and the greatest enmity and obstinacy may be consistent with the greatest cowardice.

IV.—*"Ready to be entreated."* How different is this *fourth* mark of the wisdom which cometh from above from our fallen nature! How hard usually is man to be entreated! Is a favour wanted? What bowings and cringings does he require before he grants it! What flattery before, what supple gratitude after! If he be offended, how hard to be overcome! With what slowness, what difficulty, what unwillingness does he relax his angry brow! how slow to overcome his angry temper! how backward to forgive the unhappy offender against his dignity, his pride, or his interest! But how different is grace in its fruits and effects upon the soul! When divine wisdom drops into the heart, when some measure of this pure fountain of heavenly grace distils into the soul, it makes a man "easy to be entreated." He must give way. There is that brokenness, that contrition, that sense of unworthiness, that tenderness communicated by the operations of God the Spirit upon the soul that he becomes "easy to be entreated." He must give way when his heart is softened, broken, and melted by the blessed Spirit shedding abroad love in his soul.

But why is the heart wrought upon by divine teaching "easy to be entreated?" Is it not because it has ever to carry about with it the deepest sense of its unworthiness? Is it not because it has tasted in some measure that the Lord is gracious? because it has felt the goodness and mercy of God, and been melted down at his feet by his superabounding grace? This makes a man "easy to be entreated." Has the Lord had mercy upon him, and shall he not be merciful to

another? Has the Lord pardoned his sins, and shall he not pardon the transgressions of a brother? Has the Lord looked upon him with favour and melted his heart, and shall he stand up in obduracy, wrath, and obstinacy against one who bears Christ's name and wears Christ's image?

V.—"*Full of mercy.*" This is the fifth mark of that wisdom which is from above. Why "full of mercy?" Because this wisdom flows out of the heart of eternal mercy. What a sweet sound is *mercy* to a fallen sinner, to all who know and feel themselves to be guilty criminals, deserving nothing but eternal displeasure! Having tasted of the sweetness of mercy, does not this make a man merciful? Mercy is always accompanied with a sense of our guilt and shame, and a deep sense of our own unworthiness. Mercy brings us low in the dust. Mercy makes us feel ourselves to be "the chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints." Mercy breaks the hard heart, softens the obdurate heart, dissolves the stony heart. The man, therefore, who knows anything of his own vileness, has no stone to throw at others. He who feels his own corruption, and knows how sin works in his fallen nature, nay, at times bursts forth like the leprosy in Miriam's forehead, cannot cast off trembling sinners. No; mercy will never lead a man to stand up in pride and self-righteousness. Mercy never leads a man, because perhaps he has lived a consistent life, to cut and hack at God's sin-burdened and temptation-harassed people. Mercy pardoning aggravated crimes—mercy superabounding over the vilest transgressions—mercy flowing undeservedly into a sinner's guilty conscience, makes him pitiful and tenderhearted, gives him to feel for the tempted and tried, constrains him to take the lowest place amongst God's children, and causes him to feel that he of all men has least to say against others. How different are these fruits and effects of heavenly wisdom and divine teaching from all that is produced by natural religion

under whatever shape, whether the highest Calvinism or the lowest Arminianism! What can natural religion do for a man? Does it find his heart hard? It renders it harder. Does it find him self-righteous? It establishes him as a more confirmed Pharisee. Does it find him resting on his own strength? It leads him to lean on it more confidently. Does it find him far from God? It sets him infinitely farther. But what does grace for a man? Grace makes a man feel that of sinners he is chief; grace humbles a man, in soul feeling, into the very dust; grace manifests to him the corruptions of his heart; and grace in mercy pities, pardons, blots them out, forgives, and subdues them. And thus, a man having known something of mercy, and being enriched and ennobled with the wisdom which is from above, is "full of mercy." Nothing delights him more than hearing of God's mercy to poor fallen wretches. Nothing in the character of God suits him better than that he is "rich in mercy, and plenteous to forgive." And if he meet with a poor guilty child of Adam, mourning, sighing, and crying on account of sin working in him, his heart overflows with tender affection; he would, if God enabled him, take him by the hand, and lead him to the cross of Jesus, and tell him, that because he hath found mercy, what hope there is for him. How this shines forth in that blessed man of God, Hart! He had gone to great lengths of transgression; he had backslidden very far from God; yea, he had sinned that grace might abound. But when the Lord revealed himself unto him; when mercy reached his heart; when love and blood met in his conscience, what a sweet impression did they leave upon his soul, and how he has poured forth the very feelings of his heart in those hymns which have been so blessed to God's people! How a sense of his sins and of God's mercy shines through every line; and how he always abhorred himself! As one of his biographers says, "He dwelt always in the outer porch, because he ever bore his shame." Yet how tenderly and suitably he speaks to

God's family! Such will ever be the effect of God's mercy in a man's soul. It will make him merciful to others, and will break to pieces that proud, legal, pharisaic spirit which ever says, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou!"

VI.—"*Full of good fruits.*" This is the *sixth* mark which the Holy Spirit by the pen of James has stamped upon heavenly wisdom. As a tree is known by its fruits, so is the wisdom which is from above distinguished by its rich and abundant crop. Among these good fruits, there is the fruit of *faith* whereby Christ is embraced in all his glorious fulness; the fruit of *hope*, the anchor cast within the veil, both sure and steadfast: the fruit of *love*, whereby the Lord is loved with pure affection, God's truth enshrined in the heart, and the Lord's people in the bosom; the fruits of *uprightness*, *integrity*, and *godly fear*. And after all, this is the grand test that we are to know men by. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" If a man has grace in his heart, there will be corresponding fruits springing out of that grace. If then we see not these fruits springing out of it, we know that neither the root, the sap, nor the stem can be good.

VII.—"*Without partiality.*" This is James' *seventh* mark of heavenly wisdom, "*without partiality.*" This is opposed to earthly wisdom, which is always partial, which loves the rich, the well-dressed, the wise, the learned, the eminent, the noble, the polished members of society. The very character of earthly wisdom is, to admire and esteem one above the other, to lavish its favours and affections on those who are adorned with all that attracts the flesh; but to despise the Lord's broken-hearted family, and look down with contempt on God's poor children in their holes and corners. But "the wisdom that is from above," being "pure," and "peaceable," and "full of mercy," looks out for the objects of God's love,



and cleaves to God's sin-burdened family. It is, therefore, "without partiality." It admires grace in rags. It loves the image of Christ, however tattered and soiled the garments be that clothe the outward man. It points its eyes, erects its ears, fixes the heart upon that which wears the image of Christ. A broken heart, a contrite spirit, however poor, however emaciated, however despised by man, however trampled upon by the great ones of the earth its possessor may outwardly be, to it the heart's affection flows as towards the image of Christ, wherever that image is seen. As two drops of water flowing down a pane of glass draw nearer and nearer, till at last they meet and coalesce in one; so where two hearts have been touched of God and made partakers of heavenly wisdom, they mutually attract each other till they coalesce and meet in an intimate blending of spirit and union of heart. This wisdom, then, as being "without partiality," flows towards Christ's image wherever it is distinctly seen. It does not admire respectable people in the church with little or no grace in their hearts; it loves and cleaves to those who are most deeply taught; to those who are most highly favoured; to those who bear most of the image of Christ. It does not bow down to the golden calf; it does not idolize fashion; it does not look at goodly apparel. It passes through all these external things; it looks through the creature as to its outward appearance, and it fixes its penetrating eye upon the image of Christ in a broken and contrite spirit. Thus, it is, "without partiality." But the wisdom which is from beneath, and is "earthly, sensual, and devilish," is partial in all its thoughts and in all its affections. It can bow down to gold and silver; it can lick the dust before respectability; whilst it can despise and trample upon the poor and needy in this world's goods, though they have the riches of Christ in their heart.

VIII.—The last mark by which the pen of divine inspiration

has described this heavenly wisdom is, that it is "*without hypocrisy.*" This feature results from its divine origin. It is from God. Sincerity and truth must be therefore its marked characteristics. Can we think for a moment, that the blessed God can drop into the heart wisdom, and that wisdom be stained with hypocrisy? No; it is impossible. And if both from its *origin*, and in its *nature* it is and ever must be "without hypocrisy," wherever it comes, into whatever heart it flows, it makes it honest and sincere. He who "in the hidden part makes us to know wisdom," "desires also truth in the inward parts." (Psa. 51:6.) And what God desires he creates. To be sincere, is the very groundwork of religion. If a man is not honest before God, his house is built upon the sand; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, great will be the fall of it. The wisdom then which is from above being so pure in its *origin*, and so pure in its *nature*, must be necessarily pure in its *effects*. No one therefore, under its divine influence, can indulge in anything like acknowledged, allowed hypocrisy. I say, 'acknowledged, allowed hypocrisy;' for possessed as we are of "a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," who is, who can be, without the inward principle of hypocrisy? And will not this, more or less, manifest itself? O how much inward hypocrisy there is amongst the people of God! and how this hypocrisy is continually manifesting itself! How it peeps out in the looks, shows itself in the tongue, and manifests itself in action! But if this be the case, will you not say, 'What, are the people of God hypocrites?' O, no; there is a wide difference between feeling hypocrisy and acting the hypocrite. It is one thing to have the *inward workings*—it is quite another to carry it out in *acts* of allowed hypocrisy. It is the same thing as with unbelief and other heart sins. I may feel the continual workings of unbelief, yet not be an unbeliever. I may be tempted to adultery, and yet not be an adulterer. Thus we shall ever have in this life hypocrisy

dwelling in us, for it is part of our fallen nature. But if we are partakers of that "wisdom which cometh down from above," *that* is "without hypocrisy." There is no hypocrisy in *that*, whatever there is in our fallen nature. Our carnal mind, our corrupt nature, is indeed a mass of hypocrisy. It breathes and savours of it unceasingly. But though the children of God feel so much of the actings and workings of hypocrisy, still they are not hypocrites. They have another principle in their hearts—a principle of simplicity and godly sincerity, that struggles against all hypocrisy and insincerity, and makes them cry to a heart-searching God to try them, and prove them, and see the ground of their heart. And thus when on the one hand, a principle of hateful hypocrisy will be ever manifesting itself, they have on the other, in their heart another principle which, testifies against it, and makes them say, "What I do, I allow not." I have sometimes, I think, felt as much hypocrisy working in my bosom as any man breathing; but I must still say with Paul, "I allow it not." It will work; it will manifest itself; it will put on such shapes and wear such forms; it will continually obtrude its hateful head. But I hate it, and I hate myself for it. I know that the "wisdom which is from above" is "without hypocrisy." Whatever hypocrisy dwells in my fallen nature, and nothing but hypocrisy dwells there, yet so far as I possess any measure of "the wisdom which is from above," that wisdom is "without hypocrisy," though *I* am not, and in this time state shall never be.

Now see, friends, whether you can trace out anything of this heavenly wisdom in your hearts. The Lord the Spirit, by the pen of James, has stamped upon it certain marks. Depend upon it, if you and I have no more wisdom than we brought into this world with us, or than we have learnt at school or college, it will perish with us, and leave our souls under eternal wrath. But if, on the other hand, we have been made

partakers of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation; if some pure drops out of that heavenly fountain have fallen into our hearts, this character will be stamped upon it,— "pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy." Can you find these marks in you? Is it, first, "*pure?*" If so, it will purify your heart; and whilst under its gracious influences, there will be holy affections, tender sensations, spirituality of mind, and warm, fervent desires and feelings toward Jesus as the altogether lovely. When it is suspended; when its holy sanctifying influences cease to be felt, the impurity of our fallen nature will manifest itself in opposition to it. But, whilst it lasts, whilst the Spirit is distilling his holy dew, whilst the heavenly Dove is brooding with his sanctifying operations upon the heart, then pure affections, pure desires, and pure breathings reign and rule in the soul.

It is also "*peaceable;*" a sweet peace is felt; peace with God, and peace with men.

It is also "*gentle.*" It does not strive, nor cry, nor lift up its voice in the street. Being conformed to the image of its divine Author, it cannot enter into riots and brawls; it retires into some calm, secluded, quiet corner, and longs for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest, to hasten its escape from the windy storm and tempest. It will not, therefore, it cannot display unseemly turbulence and rude boisterous violence at church meetings or other meetings. It rather retires into the quietness of the sanctuary; it bows its head, and lets the storm pass over it. It cannot wrangle and jangle, rage and riot, storm and bluster with rude brawlers. The peaceable Dove that hovers over broken hearts, is frightened at these broils, expands his wings and takes flight far away from all such scenes of strife and contention.

Nor will the happy possessor of heavenly wisdom lack the fourth mark—*"easy to be entreated."* He cannot stand up in stubborn obduracy against a tearful eye, a broken heart, a contrite spirit; he must needs give way to an appeal to his tender feelings; and will not hold out in sullen obduracy, or domineering haughtiness when under the influence of this wisdom from above.

And he will also from time to time manifest himself full of mercy, and of good fruits; without allowed partiality, and without indulged hypocrisy.

I do not ask if you are always under the influence of these feelings. I should be one of the worst of hypocrites to say that I am always so. But I ask you, if you have any measure, at any time, of this wisdom which is from above. I do not ask you, whether you are always under the sanctifying operations of God the Comforter: I ask you whether you have ever felt them? whether you love to feel those blessed communications of light and life to your soul? and whether you know the difference between them and the opposite workings of the flesh which continually manifest themselves to your soul's grief and shame? And is not this wisdom, and this conduct becoming the gospel? becoming that great name by which you are called? becoming members of gospel churches, who have taken up Jesus' name upon their lips, and profess to follow him in that strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life? Will any broken heart and contrite spirit rebel against these truths? Will not this ever be the language of every tender conscience? of every soul that desires to fear God? I know these are solemn truths; but I mourn and lament that I have so little of that wisdom which is from above; I have reason to abhor myself that I have so much of this wisdom which is from beneath. But it is my soul's desire to be blessed with heavenly wisdom, and to

have all its blessed and precious fruits brought forth in my heart, my lip, and my life. Remember this, it is from above, it is a free gift; it flows from free and sovereign grace. It was never manufactured upon earth, never made on the anvil and wrought in the smithy by the arms of human strength and skill. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." It springs out of Jesus' fulness, and is freely given to the poor, needy, humble, and contrite, that wait at mercy's door-posts, asking the Lord to look down upon them and bless them.

Blessed are we, if we can trace any measure of this heavenly wisdom in our hearts; for if it come down *from* heaven, it will take *to* heaven. If it has visited our souls, it has been the foretaste and earnest of immortal bliss. The heavenly calm, the divine sensations which it produces, are the sure pledges of that "rest which remaineth for the people of God," where

"Not a wave of trouble rolls,  
Across their peaceful breast."