

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 6: The Proof of True Wisdom
March 10, 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Thank you very much Abundant Life Singers. We're looking forward to their ministry during the Spring Enrichment Week, as has been announced that we'll be beginning on Monday night, March 24. Joe Stowell III will be with us speaking during that week, morning, and evening. And [Dick Tolens 00:00:19] has put together a musical program featuring The Abundant Life Singers, the male quartet, others of our traveling groups, The Sword Bears our Corral, I believe The Symphonic Band. It's going to be a great time and week of music, using our own people. We're looking forward to Brother Stowell being with us. Many of you, him, his in depth the ministry and the Word of God, very practical. I'm sure it will have a great impact upon our lives.

Paul H. Dixon:

And also would like to say, as we bring this quarter to a conclusion that I look back with great joy on the spirit that's been manifested during the winter quarter here at Cedarville, it's been a very fine quarter and we're grateful for it. You as a student body have had overall very fine attitudes and we're grateful for what God has been doing during the 10 weeks. As we look forward to the spring quarter, again, we begin with the Spring Enrichment Week and brother Stowell. That will be followed with a three day series in chapel, by brother Nile Fisher from the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio. I consider him to be one of the exceptional preachers in the entire state of Ohio. You'll find him to be a real man of the book. He'll have an exceptional ministry with us. We look forward to that.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then Dr. Jack Jacobs from the Walnut Ridge Baptist Church in Waterloo, Iowa. I thought that was his daughter clapping down here, but it's not. He has of course a daughter here in school and others know of him, and I'm sure you'll find his ministry a great blessing. One of our trustees of the college.

Paul H. Dixon:

That's followed by an in forum on politics that ought to be very meaningful and profitable, especially in this year of a great interest in politics. Dave Burnham from the chapel on Fir Hill, in Akron, Ohio, one of the great churches in the state of Ohio, he's been here in the past and I believe one who has an outstanding ministry on college campuses across America. We look forward to brother Burnham and his three days stay with us.

Paul H. Dixon:

Evangelist John Canine will be with us for at least two days, maybe three days. Dr. Viggo Olsen will be with us for three days in May, considered be one of the great mission statesman in our land today from Bangladesh, many of you know, his book Doktor. Paul Tassell, the new national representative will be with us for three days. We look forward to that.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then I think out of all of the weeks, the one that I look forward to perhaps the most, our own Dr. Robert Gromacki, will be with us, the head of our Bible department, bringing a series that I'm sure will be very helpful and profitable. And then to close out the year, one of the most refreshing preachers in

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America to a Dr. Howard Sugden will be with us for a three day series. And so there's a lot to look forward to in the chapels, in the times that we meet together.

Paul H. Dixon:

Along with that, Jerome Hines will be here. Of course, one of the great opera singers known across America for his Christian testimony. Many people will be coming in from all over the state to hear him and so much to be praying about as we look to the spring quarter.

Paul H. Dixon:

I want to thank Kim for his comments to the fans. And along with that, he mentioned the response we've been getting from Defiance. I understand the Dean students called and he said, "How do you have a student body like that?" He said, "I've never seen anything like it, not only the way they cheered during the entire game, but the spirit of the students who are fans and then your own basketball players and the way that you applauded our team, you did not boo us, but you applauded us at the end of the game, when we received the plaque."

Paul H. Dixon:

And then I received a letter from [Dean Reko 00:04:31] today that came to him. This is an open letter to Cedarville College from [Ronald Esheba 00:04:37], from the National Bank of Defiance, Ohio, "Dear sir, may I begin by saying that I am not one to normally express an opinion upon a particular event. Last night, I had the privilege of attending the basketball game between Defiance College and Cedarville College. Never have I been so impressed with a group of young people as last night. From the moment I entered the gymnasium until the final buzzer had sounded, I was amazed at the support and sportsmanship displayed by the student body, faculty and staff.

Paul H. Dixon:

During the singing of the national anthem, I knew the Cedarville fans were something special. Usually you hear a few mumbled voices singing, but last night it seemed as though a choir was singing. As the game wore along and things were not going quite right for Cedarville." He's not only astute, he's kind. "The fans were still loyal and not once did I hear any booing. I was truly impressed with the conduct the fans throughout the evening. Cedarville College should be very proud of its teams and very dedicated fans. I came away from last night's game, quite happy, not only because Defiance College won, but also because of the tremendous respect I gained for the fans and team of Cedarville College. It was very refreshing to be a part of the spirit that was present last night. And so we're grateful for this kind of testimony. And again, it reminds us of how God uses everything that we do for his honor and for his glory.

Paul H. Dixon:

Take your Bibles, please. And turn with me to the Book of James chapter three. We conclude the third chapter of the Book of James today. And the Lord willing will conclude chapters four and five during the spring quarter. You'll remember that the title of the entire book is Show Your Faith. Chapter one is Show Your Faith in the Warfare, in the midst of the trials of life. Chapter two is Show Your Faith by Your Works. And chapter three, Show Your Faith by Your Words.

Paul H. Dixon:

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And as we started our study of the third chapter two weeks ago, we gave you this outline. Verse one, the peril of the teacher. And I think we need to read that verse again because it ties in so significantly with our verses we will be studying today. "My brethren, be not many teachers knowing that we shall receive, all of us shall receive the greater judgment." Then we noted in verses 2-12, the power of the tongue. And we use [Dr. Weirsp's 00:07:50] outline in verses 2-4, the power to direct, and 5-8, the tongue has power to destroy. And in 9-12, the tongue has the power to delight. Now we must not separate those verses from the first verse. I do believe that primarily he is speaking to the teachers in the congregation. But this is applicable to the entire congregation, and certainly to all of us today.

Paul H. Dixon:

In verses 13-8, (III) The Proof of True Wisdom. It occurred to me as I was studying this passage that James delights in contrasting the true and the false. You'll recall, when we studied the first part of chapter two, he gave us what would be a false love and then that would be a genuine or a true love. And the latter part of chapter two, he contrasted a false faith and a true faith. And now in chapter three, he's going to show us the difference in a false wisdom and a true wisdom.

Paul H. Dixon:

It seems that especially as we pick up verse 13, he's going back to the thrust of verse one. When he talks about those who desire to be teachers carelessly, evidently for vainglory, he says in verse 13, "Who is a wise man, and indued with knowledge among you?" And some commentators have anticipated that as he would give this question, most in the congregation would respond with uplifted hands. "Me, I consider myself to be what eyes and I personally have been indued with knowledge."

Paul H. Dixon:

But then it's where the rub comes in, he says, "Let him show out of a good conversation, out of a good manner of living." And though we've been talking about the tongue in our speech and in our common vernacular, or a conversation in that day, when the King James was written, it had more to do than just our speech. It had to do with every area of our living. He says, as he did in chapter two, "It is not enough to say, "I have knowledge. I have wisdom." We must demonstrate that fact, we have a responsibility to show forth our wisdom."

Paul H. Dixon:

It's interesting that the Greek word translated knowledge is the word that has to do with expert or professional knowledge. And evidently James is saying, "That isn't enough." And that's good for us to be reminded of in an academic institution like this, that just having knowledge, and even having truth, does not necessarily mean that we are wise or that we are spiritual. Now, please do not misunderstand, that is the purpose of this institution, that we might find truth, that we might have truth, that we might propagate truth. And we are in a constant pursuit of knowledge. But James warns us that there's more to it than that. Perhaps the key word is meekness. "Let him show forth or show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."

Paul H. Dixon:

I think today we equate meekness with weakness, not so in the Bible, the Greek word for meekness is the word for controlled power. In classical Greek, it had to do with a horse that had been broken. You would not say that a broken horse had any less power. It had just been channeled, it now was useful.

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And of course, that's the great danger with all of us. As we gather our facts and our knowledge, and our pursuit of truth. Sometimes like the horse, it can run wild and trample everyone else in the pursuit.

Paul H. Dixon:

Meekness of course, is a fruit of the spirit, Galatians 5:23. Meekness has no desire to glory over others. Class, Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest." Verse 29, "For I am what? Meek. Meek and lowly of heart." Certainly Christ was truth personified. And yet Christ was meek.

Paul H. Dixon:

I like to think of Abraham Lincoln. I'm not going to make a case for spirituality or conversion. My point is this, from what little I know of Abraham Lincoln, I think of a very wise man, but I also think of a very meek man. Someone has described Abraham Lincoln as a man of velvet steel. Don't you like that? That's what James is talking about.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, he's going to give us a false wisdom and then he will give us a true wisdom. If you have (III), and I think it is helpful for you taking notes, for me to explain this to you in your outlining. (III) is The Proof of True Wisdom. What I've given you to this point is introductory. Then III (a), is False Wisdom. (a) 1, is A Wrong Motive. One of the things that characterizes a false wisdom is a wrong motive, verse 14. "But if you have bitter, envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie out against the truth."

Paul H. Dixon:

To sum it up, what James says in verse 14 is that the motivation for a false wisdom is to glorify self. Bitter envying characterizes these individuals. The word for envying is the word for zeal, and you put the word bitter with it and you get the idea of a jealous zeal. It's the idea of regarding those who hold opposing viewpoints as enemies to be annihilated rather than friends to be persuaded. Do you see the difference?

Paul H. Dixon:

In this wrong motive, we also note that it produces strife in our hearts. The Greek word for strife is the word for selfish ambition. There's a party spirit. We know that this is true in the Bible at the church of Corinth, where they were divided into the Apollosites and the Cephasites and the Paulites and the really spiritual group who were the Christites.

Paul H. Dixon:

And that happens in the churches today. Within our fundamental Christianity. And I think you will see that what James is saying is very relative to what we heard last week from Dr. Welch. And I will not draw the parallels. I will allow you to do that in your own consideration. But within fundamental Christianity, we want to get all into different parties. That even happens in our churches, we have one pastor who builds the church and he is there for 10 years. And then there's another pastor who's there, who comes in for five years. And there's another pastor who comes in for 15 years and they're all divided.

Paul H. Dixon:

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Some people in the church like pastor number one the best and they're never going to accept any other pastor. And then there's some others, though I like pastor number two and some others take pastor number three. And then that carries over into an institution like this, where some choose up sides on professors. Well, I'm this kind of an -ite or I'm that -ite, and then, so we choose up sides again. That is not God honoring. This is exactly what James is attacking.

Paul H. Dixon:

You remember what Paul said to the Philippians? When he said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He said, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in loneliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves." This is an interesting statement about glory, not in line, not against the truth. It's difficult. The RSV has it, "Do not boast and be false to the truth." If you go around glorying in your wisdom, you may have truth, but you are false to that truth.

Paul H. Dixon:

[Hort 00:18:20], gave an amazing statement on these words that I just read. I quote, "The mere possession of truth is no security for the utterance of it. All utterance is so colored by the moral and spiritual state of the speaker, that truth issues as falsehood from his lips in proportion as he himself is not in a right state." Oh, but you say, "Brother Dixon, do you not remember what Paul said again in Philippians chapter one 15-18?" Yes, I remember. You want to just put that in your notes and go back and study it. But he talked about those who preach Christ of what? Envy and strife.

Paul H. Dixon:

Evidently James is dealing with the same kind of a problem that Paul was dealing with. And we're dealing with the same thing today. And Paul said, "Even though there are those who preach Christ of envy and strife and self-will and self-glory, praise the Lord. Christ is being preached." And I think James would say the same thing, that Paul did not justify their motivation. I think Paul, if he were here today would say, "Hey, they could have accomplished a lot more for Christ, if they wouldn't have had that kind of motivation. I still rejoiced that Christ is preached, even if it be with the wrong motive." God blesses his word. I have known of some preachers who preach Christ, who were living in immorality, and God blessed his word. That did not justify the immorality, that didn't make the immorality right.

Paul H. Dixon:

Not only is there a wrong motive in verse 15, there's a wrong source. Where does this we wisdom come from? Well, James says, "It descended not from above. It doesn't come from God, but it's earthly, sensual and devilish." He gives three descriptions of this kind of false wisdom. It comes from the earth. It's a worldly kind of wisdom. You see, what happens to us in our pursuit of God's truth, many times we carry over some of the characteristics of the world. Some of the things from the political arena, some of the things from the business world, some of the things that the world accepts and that we just kind of by assimilation begin to accept as well.

Paul H. Dixon:

The world has some truth by common grace. But I think, I must say the world has not much wisdom. Warren Wiersbe says, "Man unlocks the secrets of the universe, but he does not know what to do with them." Usually we turn them on ourselves. Thoreau said, "We have improved means to unimproved ends." And I think that's a pretty good commentary on the world's use of its knowledge.

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Paul H. Dixon:

And wrong wisdom comes from the earth. It's characterized by being worldly. Another sources, it sensual or natural, in contrast to the spiritual in 1st Corinthians chapter two. It's interesting that this word translated sensual is the root word for our word, psychology. And praise the Lord for a Christian Psychology department. But you take psychology apart from God's true. You take psychology apart from Christianity and you have something that is very natural and that is very sensual and is very dangerous.

Paul H. Dixon:

Comes from the earth, it's sensual and it's devilish or demonic. You see, anything that isn't from above is from below, and the devil always is working on our minds. If you haven't memorized 2nd Corinthians 11:3, put that on your list of priorities for scripture memorization, 2nd Corinthians 11:3. "But I fear that's by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The devil always is working on the mind. And this false wisdom that comes from our minds, if it is characterized by selfishness and the things that we have noted here, it is not from God, it is from the devil.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then there's a wrong result, A, a wrong motivation 2, a wrong source and then 3, a wrong result. And what does it result in? Verse 16, "Where in envying and strife is, there is confusion and every kind of evil work." The word for confusion, disorder from instability. We go back to chapter one, verse eight, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Chapter three, verse eight, "But the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil." So we see that this false wisdom produces tongues that result in evil works, that there's confusion. And certainly it is not God honoring.

Paul H. Dixon:

I think we have to recognize that today, many of our fundamental churches are filled with this. Instead of having a spirit of unity, that's based on truth, and where there is the right kind of spirit among God's people. Those of us who have the truth have declared war on each other. Someone said this, and I like it. "Fundamentalists are the only ones who kill our wounded." And you think that one through. We ought to be the ones who are going to each other, who care about each other, who are trying to unite hands to get the job done for Christ because we have the answer for the world, but we're too busy fighting among ourselves. If we can't find someone outside the camp to fight, then we'll jump on each other and God deliver us because this is not the kind of wisdom that James is talking about. It's a false wisdom.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, what is a true wisdom? Versus 17 and 18. If we have a false wisdom, A, B, we have a true wisdom. Number one, it has a right source. Verse 17. "That wisdom is from above." Not from below. In verse 15, but from above. And of course you'll recall that that's why James told us, if you lack wisdom, where do we go? We go above. We ask of God who gives us wisdom, liberally and upgrade at thought. You'll remember that in chapter one, verse eight, every good and perfect gift come from where, class?

Male:

Above

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Paul H. Dixon:

Above. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. John chapter three, verse one through seven, says, "We are born from where?" Above. 1st Corinthians chapter 1:30 says, "Christ is our what? Wisdom." And Colossians chapter two, verse three, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of what? Wisdom and knowledge." Ephesians chapter one verse 17. "The Holy Spirit is the spirit of wisdom." 2nd Timothy chapter three, verse 15. "The scriptures make us wise unto salvation, but unto everything else as well." You might want to note Deuteronomy chapter four, 5a and 6a, they teach the same thing. All true wisdom comes from God, from God's word, from the Holy Spirit, from Jesus Christ, the incarnate wisdom himself. So there's a right source.

Paul H. Dixon:

Two, there are right characteristics. This wisdom that is from above is first, and if you've never done this, circle that, star it, underline it. Number one, James says, it's pure. The word for pure is related to holy. It is pure enough to approach God. Rather than it being selfish, sensual, and arrogant, it is characterized by being pure. It is only as we are pure in our lives, and in our thinking process, and in our motivation, and in our relationships to each other, as well as to God that we can really have true wisdom. Not only is it pure, but James says it's peaceable. That's in contrast to the strife and the confusion and the division of worldly wisdom.

Paul H. Dixon:

Please don't misunderstand me. This is not peace at any cost, it's not at the expensive truth, nor of purity. But this wisdom doesn't go out looking for a fight. It doesn't take delight in cutting up and hurting others, act intellectually. I can remember when I was in school, we always had a few who just delighted in getting some others who perhaps were inferior intellectually and getting them into some kind of debate and just chewing them up and spiting them out. What they really liked to do was flaut their intelligence. They like to impress everyone. This is not a true wisdom. It's not cocky. It's not superior. It's characterized by being pure and peaceable and gentle.

Paul H. Dixon:

Barclay says, "Of all the Greek words in the New Testament, this is the most untranslatable word. We have a tough time with it." Matthew Arnold translates it, sweet reasonableness. It's a complete absence of harsh criticism of others. It's the willingness to make even excuses for others. Do you ever do that? Do you ever get around someone who has an opposing position from what you might hold, and yet say, "Well, maybe I've had an opportunity to do a little more reading than he has. Perhaps I could pass some books onto him and he might read. And it just could be that maybe he's done some reading I haven't done. And maybe he has something to teach me."

Paul H. Dixon:

Or you may have someone who just does not evidence a good Christian godlike spirit to you, yet you say, "Well, I knew that's the way he was." "I knew that's the way she was." Or do you ever say, "Well, maybe he didn't get a good night's sleep last night. Maybe he's going through some pressures that I don't know anything about." Do you ever work at making excuses for others and their behavior? To a degree, that's what James is talking about when he says this, true wisdom is characterized by gentleness. It allows for the ignorance and the limitations of others.

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Paul H. Dixon:

Then another characteristic, easy to be entreated. Fascinating thought. The idea of being approachable. Are you approachable? I have to ask myself that, and the faculty has to ask that, the students and staff. Can people actually come to us, they feel comfortable in saying, "I'm not really sure I agree with you." Are we willing to sit down and actually listen to them and hear them out? It means being open to reason, not obstinate and stubborn. It says, "It is possible I may not have all of the truth on this matter." Someone said, "Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much. Wisdom is humble that he knows no more." You see the difference?

Paul H. Dixon:

Then full of mercy and good fruit. James says, "This true wisdom is not purely academic and unsympathetic to the needs of others." It's not a cynical hard, sterile, purely academic thing, but rather it is full of compassion and good deeds. There have been some people who spent their entire lives gathering facts, in a pursuit of truth and knowledge. But the sad thing is that many of these people have never had an impact upon the world. It's just truth for truth's sake.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then he says, "Without partiality." That means undivided, single minded. We go back to chapter one again, "It does not waiver and vacillate." James is always counterbalancing. Maybe these other things that he said to us would give us the idea that we would be weak. We would be compromisers. No, no. James says, "I'm saying you ought to be single minded. You ought to have your convictions. You ought to know what you believe and why you believe it. And yet that ought to be balanced out with the right kind of spirit." I like the individual, I know where he stands. Anytime you're around him, he's willing to say, "Here I stand on any position." And yet he has an excellent spirit as did Daniel, without hypocrisy. Of course, the word for hypocrisy has to do with one putting on a mask. It was the Greek word for an actor. This person who has true wisdom is very genuine, very honest and very sincere.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then notice the right result. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." Conclude with Two thoughts. First of all, from John Calvin, "Those who exercise the wisdom from above, while they meekly tolerate many things in their neighbors do not cease to sow righteousness, but strive to correct the faults of others by peaceful means. They moderate their zeal with the condiment of peace. For those who wish to be physicians to heal vices ought not to be executioners." Great thought.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then I'm reminded of what Paul said in Colossians 4:5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." We have a responsibility to have true wisdom. First of all, to God who gives it. Secondly, in our relationship to others, in the body of Christ, in our local family here, in our families at home. These principles I'm giving you are applicable to your own marriage relationship that you will establish and your children, in the churches that you are members of and will be members of. So there's a responsibility to God to have true wisdom, to each other, to have true wisdom, there's a responsibility to self, but there's also a responsibility to that lost world out there. And I'll be honest with you, a lot of us may have truth, but the spirit by which we manifest that, which shows false wisdom rather than true wisdom has done great harm to the cause of Christ. And God deliver us who have now been exposed to

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the teaching of James from that. May we walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Paul H. Dixon:

"Our father, thank you for James. He's so pointed, so practical. I pray you will open our understanding, enable us to practice what we've heard today in our wonderful savior's name. Amen. Have a good day.