

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

May 14, 2020



These brass plates, found in the cobblestone and brick sidewalks in 600+ cities in Germany, are reminders of man's inhumanity to man. They are Stolpersteine, "stumbling blocks" that remind Germans and tourists that the people who were taken from cities and town were not just statistics but human beings. I found these in Bamberg, Germany, October 2018.

Jamie's Demonic Cousins

My younger cousin, Jamie was a big, gentle kid who wasn't dumb but wasn't quick-witted, either. In other words, it was far too easy for me and my other cousins to make fun of him. He had "issues." He couldn't tie his shoes even well past the age when he should have learned that basic life skill. He would pour sugar on his fruit loops, then complain his cereal was too sweet. He was the "anti-athlete" — he couldn't catch a ball if his life depended on it. We ridiculed him relentlessly for these and his many other shortcomings.

Little did we know that we were doing the devil's work.

In our study with the family last night, we took a look at James 3:13-18. It starts with *"Who is wise and understanding among you?"* "Wisdom" is typically defined as "putting knowledge into practice" and that's an adequate definition of practical wisdom. For example, it's one thing to know how to use a chain saw, quite another to know how to cut down a large tree without killing yourself or someone else or whether to cut down the tree at all.

But James views wisdom in a different light altogether. Look at verse 17:

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

He begins his description of wisdom with "pure" (Gk., *hagnos*). Instead of moral purity, in this context it seems that

"pure" means something like "innocent" or "unassuming." It might even refer to purity in motives and attitude.

The terms that follow are all relationship terms. James is saying that if we are wise in the "heavenly" sense, then we are people who go out of our way to be kind and seek peace with others. The result? *"A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* The opposite of that is to be jealous and selfishly ambitious, which James says is a "wisdom" that is *"earthly, unspiritual and demonic"* (3:15) and leads to *"disorder and every vile practice."*

It's safe to say that God cares very much about our relationships, about how we treat people. *All* people. There is no disclaimer in this text about the moral status or political stance of the person, or whether the person repays the kindness. The wise person is either *"peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere"* or he or she is not wise.

We were not wise in our dealings with Jamie. We were demonic, actually. He became an easy target for us to feel better about ourselves because we could tie our shoes and catch a ball. We were, in that little world, "the cool kids."

The last time I saw Jamie, he was still a big, gentle man. But now he had long hair, tattoos, chains hanging off his belt and was riding a Harley. I'm not criticizing any of that, just wondering if we helped point him in that direction.