

THE LEAST OF THESE

-Ryan Parsons-

In middle school and high school, I had a best friend. Unfortunately for him, this kid, much smaller than me, was often treated more like a little brother than a friend. He endured years of punishment from me as we wrestled through our teenage years, and he still bears the scars to prove it. I can remember once when a physical altercation broke out between us over who would sit in the front seat of the car. We literally sparred for the seat; both trying to occupy and dethrone the other. I rode home in the back seat that day. Not because I had lost the fight, but because my friend's father, the owner of the car, had put me in my place. It is a stark reminder of my selfishness in both my thoughts and actions.

Nothing will make you consider your own heart more than being put in your place. My conscience is permanently seared from the awareness of the pure selfishness that occupied my heart for years. Moreover, I am keenly aware of the moments it begins to bubble again to the surface. James says it is dangerous business.

James 3

13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14* *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15* *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16* *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17* *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18* *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

I don't have a problem considering my own perspective and agenda. I like my wisdom, and I am comfortable with it. However, being pure, peaceable, open, merciful, full of good fruit, impartial and sincere are a little more difficult for me. Jesus challenged his listeners to not only consider "the least of these," but to ensure that decisions were made to care for them (Matthew 25). Much could be said about that passage, but in short, it calls Christ followers to know, consider, and deploy active (practiced) wisdom on behalf of those in lesser condition.

Philippians 2

3 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4* *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

May we be people who anticipate a harvest of righteousness (James 3:18) as we sow in peace. May our thoughts and actions in the days to come reflect our love and honor for all and not just ourselves and our own.