

A Sermon for DaySpring Baptist Church

By Burt L. Burleson

“Do You Want to Upgrade Now?”

The fourth in a series entitled, The Work We Do

James 3: 13-18; 4: 7-10

September 24, 2006

The Bible is written from another world and, at many points, difficult for us to appreciate and understand because we're living in a different world.

Our reading from James this week is a good illustration of that. James, as he's writing to these first century, Jewish, Christians... he talks about wisdom... he uses the word *wise* and I'm not sure exactly what you hear in that... *wise*?

The kind of person you want to talk to when you've got a problem.

Probably, a person who seems really mature...

Smart... in a way that makes a difference in life...

I suspect that's some of what James' readers read into this... but it's not all of it. Wisdom was a kind of knowing... Wisdom was a way of knowing. It was a knowledge that went beyond...

what you pick up from mom and dad

or on the street

or in the academy

or even in the “school of hard knocks.”

There were “wisdom schools” in the ancient Middle East. It wasn't just that some persons were wise because that's the way they happen to be. Typically, they would have been taught by a wisdom teacher, in a wisdom school.

And wisdom itself wasn't your run of the mill learning... reading, writing, and arithmetic... It wasn't a subject you mastered at all. It, on the other hand, mastered you.

If you were wise, you had a relationship to wisdom. That's why the author of Proverbs refers to wisdom in a personal way... “**She...**” the writer says. You know and are known... It's relational... intimate... direct.

When it comes to wisdom, nothing is second-hand or hand-me-down. It's an immediate, direct way of knowing and knowing something that seems to flow to you from someplace else and it gets in you... it changes you.

So... now listen to James again. ***It will be apparent who is wise because of the quality of their lives... You'll see deeds done in humility that come from wisdom.***

See the flow... Wisdom... to humility... to good deeds in a good life.

And he goes on to contrast that wisdom, and what it produces, with another so-called “wisdom.” ***If bitterness, envy, and ambition are lodged in your heart (inner being) then they come from a “wisdom” that ...*** and notice the qualifiers. “***Does not come down*** (again the flow, movement) ***it does not come down from heaven...*** from the eternal, infinite realm. Rather... it is...

“***Earthly...***” limited and limited to this horizontal plane.

“***Unspiritual...***” disconnected from Spirit.

“***Demonic...***” in opposition to... God.

So, maybe with a wisdom culture in mind, we hear something more of what James is saying. But still, we moderns are limited so... lets use an analogy and I know they'll all

eventually fail us but let's give it a try. Let's compare this ancient, spiritual world of James with our high-tech, computer world.

I want to try and define, with this computer analogy, some churchy language that we often use but use in fairly nonspecific ways. We just drop these words here and there and think we're understanding one another but maybe we're not.

First, there's the soul... (We hear that word a lot... Soul) And the soul is your hard drive. It's the equipment that was installed... the part of the hardware that is essential to compute. It's there in every computer, like the soul is in every human being. You don't have a computer without a hard drive and you don't have a human being without a soul.

The soul is a part of you...

It is within you...

It functions... it does certain things... is built for that.

That's the soul... your hard drive. Got it?

Now... the self... (There's another word you hear). The self is your software. It's unique to you... specific for you. And in many ways, one of a kind... Has your style, your personality... coded right in there. It's also picked up a lot, your self-program has... from experience and culture... some of that's good... some not.

Some of us, have software that functions fairly well... we get along and accomplish a lot... move through life pretty easily, computing this and that.

For others, it's not so easy because some "hack" sat down at the terminal of your life while you weren't paying attention and loaded a bootlegged version of who you are.

It's not authentic.

So, it's really messed up...

not really who you are...

Bottom line? The self-program isn't running like it was made to run... glitches all the time. Unexplained shut downs... Lot's of lost time and memory that's been corrupted... and it's really caused the hard drive... the soul... to malfunction. Its just not very productive... doesn't work...

So, some of us, it seems, are calling a technician every other day. And some are helpful and some seem half-a-world away and they're just... well... irritating.

Are you getting this... the analogy? There's a soul that's a hard drive and a self that's software. And... then there's the Internet. And I know the analogy can really break down here, but for the purpose of our explanation today, the Internet is the Spirit and the world of the Spirit.

It's out there...

Carrying everything, everywhere...

Connecting everyone to everything...

And, most importantly, connecting us to the Server with a capital 'S'. What is in the Server flows to us by way of the Internet. It's made available to us... What is in the Source... flows to us by the Spirit.

And one day, while we're really getting frustrated because our software is being it's usual... predictable... limited... frustrating self. We get this little pop-up on our screen. There it is... sort of glowing... and it says, **"Do you want to upgrade now?"**

And you look at it... And something in you wants to click the 'yes' button. But... you're also afraid, because this is what you've always known. Same ole' system. It's problematic but familiar. At least you know how to work with it.

But you aren't sure about this new offer. **“What if it's too complicated? What if you feel out of control because you don't know how to work it? What if you have to change the way you operate? What if it's a trick?”**

That's what's on your mind as your hand rests on your mouse. You're afraid... but more than you are afraid... you're tired. Tired of the same ole' selfish same ole'. Tired of your software running the same programs of envy and anger and ambition and fear. So, you click 'yes'.

And you download a new program. You download wisdom. And, from the Server, by the Internet, and through your hard drive, your soul... this new program flows to you. And it's really more than a new version of the software... it's really more like a new operating system, all together. It's a different way of being you.

And as you begin to work with this system, sometimes it seems like you're actually working from the Server, although it's hard to tell, really... whether it's your software in your computer or something from the Source.

It's interactive. And more and more you are aware that you seem constantly connected to the Internet. Like you had always been plugged into it but as messed up and clogged up as your soul was, you couldn't tell it... or would forget it... or just never knew it in the first place. And at some point, you begin to go wireless, where the connection is at a different level.

And I know what you're thinking... that the analogy has really broken down now. Because you've clicked the 'yes' button before in your life... and the old program didn't just disappear.

And James would concur... If he'd heard our analogy he'd probably say, **“Uh... you aren't going to get this by clicking a button. Wisdom takes more work than that...”**

And he sort of lays that out later in our reading... what it involves. *First... therefore,*” he says, **“Submit yourselves to God... surrender.”** It is a sort of clicking of the 'yes' button. **“Yes, I'm tired of this... I've tried it my way and I'm desperate for an upgrade... Please take over.”**

Here's the catch though... we have to keep clicking that button, over and over and over... Until it becomes our instinct.

David Burns, who is my Yoda of the high-tech world, taught me that. It pops up on my screen everyday and David said to me, **“Scared you are. But click 'yes' every time, you will.”** Now it's a habit.

Cynthia Bourgeault, a spiritual teacher, says that surrender is the **“core soul gesture.”** It's the gesture we have to learn, and to learn it we have to do it over and over and over. Like a candle surrendering it's wax and tallow and wick so that it can be transformed into light, we surrender over and again to God, in order that we might become light. (*The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, p 60)

So, James says, **“We must surrender... and...”** and he adds to the do-list for wisdom... **“We must, resist temptation... We must draw near to God and God will draw near to us. We must wash hands and purify the heart.** (inside and out) **So that we won't be so double-minded...** (We'll be united, still, inside) **We must humble ourselves...**” (Not a guilty groveling but putting ourselves in right relationship to the infinite.) **“Yes, I want... I need the upgrade.”**

This is the work we must do... if wisdom from above is to be present in our lives. And we have to be intentional... surrendering, developing that “core soul gesture,” ... saying 'yes' to the upgrade... **“I want this,”** praying for it as James teaches us to do. **“If you lack wisdom, ask God.”** Ask every day.

And resist temptation... every day.

And draw near to God... every day and God will be near.

You move... and God moves.

“There’s a synergy,” the fathers taught.

Purify the heart... the inner mind. Clean up the hard drive.

This is work... have I said that enough? It’s spiritual work. And our culture isn’t so into that. We want results and want them today. Take a number, pray the sinner’s prayer, “get your salvation and get on with your life.”

The author of Hebrews saw it differently... **“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. (Same ole’ stuff) You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”** (Lots of stuff out there on the internet.) They are wise.

This is what you were made for... you’re designed for this kind of awareness and knowing. And when it happens we understand what Jesus meant by being born again. We are “born into a new meaning.” (Cynthia Bourgeault p71) Something greater than you begins flowing to you and through you from the Source (CB, p77)

As Dante put it, **“the love that moves the stars and the sun”** flows to you. It is Love Incarnate... Wisdom personified. **It is Jesus**, **“the wisdom of God,”** who flows from God’s heart to you... And when that happens, you become the wonderfully unique, wise human being, you were created to be.

Isn’t that amazing... So... do you want to upgrade now? Do you? Click ‘yes’... say “let it be to me” ... Say “Amen.” Amen.

Copyright, Burt L. Burlison, 2006

(I’m grateful for the Ministry of Cynthia Bourgeault, whose wisdom obviously influenced this sermon. In addition to her book, The Wisdom Way of Knowing, I heard a talk she gave on the Trinity where she used the analogy of the “upgrade.” Thank you, Cynthia.)