

AM James 3

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[0:00] This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but it is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For when jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

We will look and we will think about the two kinds of wisdom, the two kinds of wisdom we will consider this morning. Well, we may know a bit about the background of James already. James is the half brother of Jesus who rose to prominence as the leader of the church in Jerusalem. You can read all that in the Acts of the Apostles.

That particular church is made up of predominantly converted Jews. It is obviously the first Christian church.

[1:25] Peter was first the leader and then he took a bit of a step down or maybe you can call it a lateral move to start other churches elsewhere.

And so James became the leader of that church. James was the leader of the church. He faced numerous challenges over the 20 years or so that he was a pastor.

There were things like famines, persecutions by the unconverted Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

And sadly, James himself was executed by the Jewish leaders in around AD 62.

And all because he followed the Lord Jesus Christ. And what we have here in this particular letter is, you can see, is a distillation of James' teaching and wisdom in this rather short but very practical work.

[2:35] He starts off with a short greeting to the converted Jews in the area.

James the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes in the dispersion. James is a little bit more of a greeting to the people of the Jews. Very short, simple greetings to the converted Jews that were outside the land of Israel.

And then he moves into something more general. Not really like the apostle Paul where his letters were very much focused on a particular church.

James is a bit more general. And he addressed every community of the followers of Christ. Which means it is applicable for us today.

In fact, all of scripture is applicable for us. But in the case of James, it is very straight forward. It is applicable for every church, every community of the followers of Christ in every day and age.

[3:37] And what he is doing is he is not teaching anything new. He is not teaching anything new. What he is doing is he is just using what is known already.

What is being passed down already by Jesus. The teachings of Christ and obviously under the inspiration. He has taken the teachings of Christ about life in the kingdom of God.

Alongside that with the proverbs. He has taken those two main sources of information and come up with this letter. So if you look at this particular letter, you can do a bit of a study on your own.

There is quite a number of either quotations or allusions to the book of proverbs. And he is telling us essentially, James is telling us by the Holy Spirit.

How should we live in the kingdom of God while we are here in this world? How should we live? How should Christians live in this world?

[4:45] And he is going to use various means of explaining that. In the case of chapter 3, he is going to touch on wisdom.

He is going to touch on wisdom. How can we be truly wise? How can Christians be truly wise living according to God's word?

Or in this case, how can we be truly wise living according to the summary of the law according to Jesus. To love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

That is essentially what James is doing. We can be truly wise. Yes, we can be truly wise when we live in accordance to the summary of the law by Jesus.

To love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And so in chapter 3, that is why he gives this rather stark warning. In chapter 3, we see not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, but you know that we who teach will be judged with a greater strictness.

[5:58] He is going to address the Bible teacher. And especially the Bible teacher and the tongue. And the tongue. That is how chapter 3 starts off.

The Bible teacher and the tongue. And the importance, the right use of our speech. But it is not just directed at the Bible teacher.

When we read something like this in chapter 3, the beginning of chapter 3, we don't seem to, we shouldn't take the approach that, oh yes, it is all about the Bible teacher. So we can just switch off. We shouldn't look at it this way. We should always see where James is going or where this is going and the importance of getting some spiritual benefit from it.

So don't just think of it as it is only for the Bible teacher. And certainly when you come to verse 15 or verse 13, who is wise and understanding among you? He is not addressing the Bible teachers or the teachers of the scriptures.

[7:05] He is not dealing with them. He is going a bit broader than that. He is more general. Who is wise and understanding among you?

He is going more than just the teacher of the word of God. He is challenging us with two qualities, wisdom and knowledge.

And how they ought to be coupled together. And how they are linked together. Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Wisdom and knowledge. You know, one can be knowledgeable and yet be unwise.

One can be knowledgeable and yet be unwise. He is now going to show us, well, what is true wisdom? What is true wisdom? To be wise is more than just speculative knowledge.

[8:14] To be wise is more than just having a set of philosophy. Or having some philosophical ideas about life itself. To be wise is more than just that.

More than just speculative knowledge. More than just philosophy. But in the words of one writer. It is to be skillfully applying knowledge to the matter of practical living.

Wisdom is to skillfully apply knowledge to the matter of practical living. Which is why I say, one can be knowledgeable but yet be unwise.

Having the knowledge, and I mean in this case the knowledge of God. One can be knowledgeable but yet be unwise. If the word of God is not handled appropriately, properly, or worse of all, not applied.

Having the head knowledge is not good enough. There must be the matter of practical living. We must live out our Christian life. You know this word, who is wise at understanding among you.

[9:22] This word understanding. Is apparently used only here in the New Testament. And it means something along the lines of a person who is a specialist. A professional.

One who can use a particular set of knowledge to do a certain task. And that's what a specialist is. And this is what this word is used here in verse 13.

To be able to apply our, to apply one's expertise to practical situations. James is saying this, who is wise at understanding among you. Who is the one who knows, understands the word of God.

And can apply it. Can use it as an expert. In living our daily lives. Remember James is a very practical letter.

And you see, you can see, those of you with the ESV, you might see all the headings. You know, warning against worldliness. Warning to the rich. Patience in suffering. The prayer of faith.

[10:32] Boasting about tomorrow. It's very, very much a practical letter. And he's asking us. Those of us who are skilled. And we all ought to be skilled in the word of God.

How are we applying it to our lives? Are we applying it to our lives? Who is wise and understanding among you.

By his good conduct, let him show his works in meekness of wisdom. Meekness of wisdom.

Meekness of wisdom. It's an interesting way of describing it.

I think the NIV says something like, humility that comes from wisdom. Humility that comes from wisdom. Either way, whether it be humility that comes from wisdom.

Or meekness of wisdom. We can say that this is wisdom and humility that links together.
[11 : 36] That is combined. That is so interlinked, interlocked together. Wisdom ought to make us humble. And we ought to be humble enough to take on wisdom.

You know, when we, when James is asking who is wise and understanding among you. By his good conduct, let him show his works in meekness of wisdom.

He's telling us that when we know something about God. If we claim to know God. If we claim to know the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And all that is accomplished on the cross of Calvary and his resurrection. In paying the price of sin for us. If we know that. You know, it means that we are responsible and obligated.

In a certain duty. Of letting others know about this as well. In a certain gospel. In a certain gospel. In a certain gospel. In a certain gospel.

[12 : 45] We read. Everyone to whom much is given. Of him. Much will be required. So we may know. If we know anything about God.

And anything about Christ. Anything about salvation. Well, we are duly. Duty bound. To tell others about that. About that salvation.

That comes through. The Lord Jesus Christ. So. Wisdom. Knowledge. And. Practical. Activities. All. Work together.

That's why one writer. Thomas Manton. Said that. True wisdom. Is knowledge. With practice. True wisdom. Is knowledge.

With practice. And I think that's a nice way of summarizing it. True wisdom. Is knowledge. With practice. And. In the Old Testament. This is nothing new.

[13 : 41] I've said at the beginning. That James is not teaching. Anything that's new. Or certainly not teaching anything. That's contrary. To the Old Testament. In the Old Testament. This idea. Is there.

True wisdom. Is knowledge. With practice. We read in Hosea. Whoever is wise. Whoever is wise. Whoever is wise. Whoever is wise. Let him. Understand these things.

Whoever is discerning. Let him. Know them. For the ways of the Lord. Are right. And the upright. Walk. In them.

See that. There's a wisdom. Understanding. Discerning. Knowing. For the ways of the Lord. Are right. And the upright. Walk. In them. That's the practical aspect.

Of. Of the. Of the. Of the. Faith. There must be. A walking. In. The. Wisdom. In.

[14 : 36] The. In. In. Knowledge. It must be. A. A. The. Knowledge. With.

Practice. Again. In Proverbs. And I already mentioned that. James. Lean. Heavily. On. Proverbs. I. Wisdom. Dwell. With. Prudence. And. Discretion. I. Wisdom. Dwell. With. Prudence.

Prudence. Is. Basically. The ability. To. Govern. To. Be. To. Be. To.

Prudence. So. I. Wisdom. That's. That's. The. The. Practical. Aspect. Of.

[15 : 31] Having. Means. Be. Able. To. The. Practical. Of. Knowledge. As. Un■.

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Un■. Un■. Un■. Un■. Un■. went no further than that they knew something about God they knew something about about the way of salvation but that's about it it went no further knowledge only is knowledge only without wisdom is an issue elsewhere we read in Paul's episode to the Corinthians we read that knowledge puffs up knowing something is one thing but using it just to do bolster about ego and that's not good having a knowledge but not apply it our own lives that's not good that's not good enough I've been leaning quite heavily on Thomas Manton because he wrote this a Puritan because here this massive commentary on James but Thomas Merton wrote that knowledge without wisdom may soon be discerned it is usually curious or meddlesome inquisitive in a bad way and censorious or fond of criticizing yeah knowledge without wisdom ends up becoming meddlesome inquisitive fond of criticizing which we see that in this day age do we not and unfortunately people will look at us if we call ourselves

Christians if we call ourselves Christians people look at us they won't see what we say you see how we live our lives a Christian is better known by his life than his than what he said he says or what she says so as we understand and as we we gain wisdom and as we receive wisdom from on high it ought to change us it ought to make us a better people fit for the Lord's work the truly wise person is a humble person is a better person and it ought to be so and in verse 14 we see that there's a

contrast there but if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts do not boast and be false to the truth this is someone who doesn't have that wisdom it's a contrast there this person is one without the wisdom without the knowledge without the meekness without the humility but it's just full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition there's a real stark contrast there you see that in verse 14 a real contrast there so what would it be James is asking us what will it be what it be for you and I well verse 15 is going to address all that he's going to deal with the impact of true wisdom on on upon our everyday life and he's going to show us there are two kinds of wisdom because there are two ways to live there are two kinds of wisdom because there are two ways to live that's the what we will call the earthly wisdom and there's the heavenly wisdom and that will be my next two points earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom verse 15 this is not and you see that the way James addresses earthly wisdom is by saying what it is not this is not wisdom that comes down from above but it's earthly unspiritual demonic already this will give you a bit of a red flag there this is a it's a wisdom that did not come down from above you remember in James chapter 1 you remember in James chapter 1 we read that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the father of lights but he's saying that this wisdom is not okay this is a wisdom that's not did not come down from from above true wisdom comes down from above and comes down to those who believe and trust in the lord Jesus Christ but this is going to address what is called earthly wisdom or sometimes you may read in some books human wisdom is earthly wisdom or human wisdom coming from the pit of hell itself no I would say that that's not the case it can come just from our own unregenerate hearts a person may be unconverted a person may not be necessarily a believer but that person may be very clever with lots of good ideas lots of smart ideas with even with good intentions you know elsewhere in in Paul's letter to the Corinthians he talks he talks about the the natural man versus the spiritual man James is dealing something along those lines that's the natural man with it's with his or her natural kind of of wisdom that relies on earthly wisdom [21 : 34] but without that proper foundation from the word of God or the the moral compass if you want to put it this way without that foundations ultimately earthly wisdom will lead us to nowhere in fact in this day and age earthly wisdom seems to lead people down greater problems down the line of the word of God and so according to James this earthly wisdom is earthly unspiritual and demonic rather hard-hitting words if you think about think about it earthly wisdom earthly this is a wisdom that with his origin that with his origin in this world in this world in society this is a wisdom that is governed only by society's ideologies and society's principles it comes from the world the world around us you know you we see in this day and age the earthly wisdom sometimes with good intentions I hasten to say with good intentions just think about for example in this country um so they elsewhere in other countries is being done the legalization of drugs why was it done why why they why do governments like for example in Portugal or in states like Oregon in America they've legalized drugs why do they do that well they have good intentions they have good intentions they wanted to remove the stigma of the use of drugs and they also wanted to root out the problem of criminal activity so they may have good intentions good okay in inverted commas good intentions but in those countries that you see they may have early successes you know in Portugal in Oregon the overdose fatalities decrease because they legalize drugs but over time and I mean over like 10 years I think or maybe 20 years funding for such uh rehabilitation decrease because they don't see the need for rehabilitation anymore legalized drugs it's not everywhere you can get it so the funding for rehabilitation decrease and what happens fatalities start to increase again so they may start off with good intentions but at the end of the day down the line 10 years 20 years later the problem comes up with a different set of problems earthly wisdom earthly wisdom earthly wisdom last month was pride month I don't know what you have here in Dumfries but everywhere else in in in certain in sterling we had all the various pride month activities you know again it's it they may start off with so-called so-called good intentions you know they wanted to get acceptance in society what we have started with with acceptance in society has now degenerated and I use the word degenerated into something far sinister so much so so much so that even if you go on social media if you can and I rather you and I did not do that but because social media even those who are homosexuals themselves are distancing themselves from pride month can you imagine that they're distancing themselves from pride because of what has taken place what is going down the line what it's is is morphed into what's degenerating to it's become an indoctrination of children

and you see that in this day and age in this country and elsewhere we can talk a bit we can go on you know about and consider things like abortion and euthanasia they all we have so-called

so-called start with good intentions but when you use earthly wisdom you you would get you nowhere and in many cases it it degrades degenerates into something very far far more sinister now i'm not i'm not trying to denigrate any ideas from society that would help to ease the pain help to remove barriers help those who are struggling that i'm not trying to denigrate any of that but i'm trying to point out that there is a wisdom that is earthly that is earthly wisdom that comes from above that comes from god next we have the unspiritual sometimes you might see in in in in some translations unspiritual or sensual or natural this is a wisdom with its origins in our own animal instincts and i use the word animal instincts rather than from our intellectual and our conscience this is a kind of wisdom that takes counseling our own natural animal appetites and desires you know it's it's a soul wisdom that that says again you can see this in social media or even in the media when people say live your best life you do you be who what you want to be do whatever you like live how you please as long as it doesn't hurt anybody that's okay that's all good as long as both parties are consensual people get on with it choose love you know that that sort of lingo that sort of sound bite that sounds all good and all that but basically what he's saying is you live your lives in the way that you are inclined to live your lives the way you are you're bent into to live your lives to a wisdom that takes on our animal instincts our natural instincts our natural instincts we are bent towards sin and we are bent against god that's how we are by nature and this kind of earthly this kind of human wisdom acts on that on the impulse if you put god out of the picture then of course you live your lives the way you like you live whatever you do whatever you want to do if you put god out of your lives then yes that's all you'll be governed by natural animal instincts i don't think we need to go further than that i think you know where where james was going with that and i trust you know where i'm i'm going with that but the third point is this demonic notice this out of three points here the third point demonic this is where we can say the devil made me do it this is where we can bring the devil into the picture notice he put it last and out of three points there's only one point well at least you know that james believes in the devil and his demons in the previous chapter in chapter 2 we read that you believe that god is one you do well even the demons believe and shut up but he certainly believes in the devil and and his demons but this is the wisdom that comes from the father of lies that's what the devil is he's the father of lies

so he takes the the first two points earthly unspiritual and all that is kind of lumped into this demonic a wisdom that comes from the father of lies and that wisdom ends up being jealous in verse 16 for where jealousy and self-ambition exists there will be disordered every vile practice so ultimately you can say that there's some common characteristics with earthly or human wisdom there's some common characteristics we can say that it is all about me first not god first but it's all about me me me i i i self first self this self that self is king god is nowhere to be found and when god is nowhere to be found where this is going to end up after what i've just described about earthly unspiritual and demonic if god is nowhere to be found well the the inevitable the inevitable would be envy and jealousy which is why we have verse 16 jealousy and selfish ambition which is not surprising right if you think about it if you think about it if you had a piece of earthly wisdom that you try to implement within your family within your society and that piece of earthly wisdom fails and then you see someone else with their own piece of earthly wisdom that they've applied to their family or to their society and they succeed what do you think is going to happen envy and jealousy you don't believe me well just watch your parliament watch whatever program that shows parliament in action what happens in parliament see how the parties tear each other down they got this thing it worked in fantastic ways well you stole our ideas i got this wonderful policy it will change the lives you make this fantastic impact i don't think it does where you're going to get the money from how you're going to spend it i go to tax the people you see what happens envy and jealousy it's that's that's inevitable it's inevitable but then we come to you heavenly wisdom the wisdom that comes from above this is a wisdom that comes from above and it's for those who are heavenly minded but we possess earthly good obviously heavenly minded those who have the mind of christ as we're reading first correctness chapter two those who possess the mind of christ those who who want the wisdom from above first of all if we read is pure first pure peaceable then peaceable gentle open reason full of mercy and good fruits impartial and sincere loads of points there trying to do that in the next 10 minutes pure this wisdom is pure heavenly wisdom is modest clean holy it's pure it's not mixed not mixed not filthy no hypocrisy there and that's going to be touched on later on peaceable peaceable without strife without contentious this is heavenly wisdom this is wisdom that comes from above is without strife or contentions is for the peacemakers and you know what jesus had to say about

peacemakers they'll be called the sons of god this is a this is a wisdom that is not going to seek revenge but will promote the greatest peace on earth between god and sinners this is a wisdom that you can put in one in one sense evangelism is a kind of heavenly wisdom because we are promoting peace between god and man when we think of peace we always think about peace between two earthly parties between between uh two human beings but peaceable is also between god and sinners and when we conduct evangelism we are promoting peace between god and sinners and that is heavenly wisdom that is heavenly wisdom i have yet to hear somebody say that evangelism is bad well maybe there may be some people who say evangelism is bad but those who are christians will know that evangelism is good because we are promoting peace between a sinner and god thomas menton wrote that truth is to be preferred yet peace is not to be neglected you know we want to promote truth we want to promote the word of god in our societies in our in our communities we want to promote truth but yet peace is not to be neglected then we read gentle the next point uh verse 17 peaceable then peaceable gentle this wisdom heavenly wisdom is is fair with moderation elsewhere this word gentle is translated as patience in first timothy chapter 3 verse 3 not a drunkard not violent but gentle that is a criteria for an elder in the church patience gentle the opposite is obviously sensorious the opposite is somebody who is harshly critical always criticizing always finding fault this wisdom is when we know when to say something when to say something how to say something but also when not to say something when to keep our mouth shut that's gentle that is patience and then next open to reason some translations would say something like willing to yield willing to yield open reason now this please don't go away thinking this is all about compromise open reason doesn't mean that you open to all kinds of reasons that you're willing to yield to anything no this is not compromise but what you're saying is not one who is stubborn and hate strong and unwilling to listen to good advice or better suggestions okay so it's about the person's character and the person's uh willingness to listen and if it's advice is good advice and the person's willing to accept it and then the next point full of mercy and good fruits you know true wisdom or heavenly wisdom wisdom is when we can show mercy to others especially those who offend us those who offend us the in proverbs again proverbs as i say really james alludes to a lot of of the proverbs we read in proverbs 19 verse 11 good sense makes one slow to anger and it is his glory to overlook an offense the wisest king the wisest man on earth king solomon's wisdom tells us the good sense makes one slow to anger and it is his glory to overlook an offense full of mercy full of mercy and then more than that having being having heavenly wisdom is also being not just full of mercy but of good fruits full of good fruits again this is we can say that paul addressed that in the fruits of the spirit but the fruits of the spirit is love joy peace long suffering kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control that's the fruit of the spirit so basically what james is saying is all these characteristics especially when you think about if we just focus our minds are full of mercy and good fruits what james is saying is this ought to be part of your dna this ought to be part of your your inner life it's been part and parcel of being a christian full of mercy and good fruits is part and parcel of being a christian it should be woven into the dna of the christian of the christian believer yes elsewhere the apostle paul did say that these are fruits that need to be exercised that's why in colossians we read put on them put on them as god's chosen ones holy and beloved compassionate hearts kindness humility maintenance and patience so there's one hand there's these qualities of heavenly wisdom is part and parcel of the believer but it's also the believers responsibility to put them on to exercise them to cultivate them to cultivate these things and then we go on to impartial and sincere without suspicion without judging in in and i mean not in a good way um but in the sense of impartial in the sense of in chapter 2 we read in james epistle their whole point about where when somebody comes to our church uh the person is rich we treat this person differently from a person who comes in who is poor uh and in chapter 2 verse 1 to 9 you can read all that that is about showing the sin of partiality wisdom from above is impartial we don't show favoritism um to those who come amongst us who are of a different social standing different um whether they're rich or poor whether they're working class or middle class we don't look at any of that the earthly wisdom does a lot of that earthly wisdom does a lot of that earthly wisdom does a lot of that they may claim to be all about love and all all that sort of ideas but you dig deeper than that earthly wisdom elevates the outward splendor of this day and age but for the believer in christ the wisdom from above is impartial and also sincere sincere so without hypocrisy that's how you you find in in some translations without hypocrisy interesting do you not notice interesting that james put this characteristic last impartial and sincere without hypocrisy he put that last it's a it's almost as if he's saying according to thomas manton that

sincerity is the highest pinnacle or highest point of wisdom

[41:49] you know sincerity or without hypocrisy is something that is a characteristic is highly valued by Jesus himself remember Jesus when he saw Nathaniel coming towards him and he said what what he said behold and Israeli indeed in whom is no guile now King James version used the word no guile but in some in the modern translation in whom there is no deceit this person is not trying to play a fast fast one with with with with with with me this person is not fraud this person is not using tricks Nathaniel Nathaniel Nathaniel Nathaniel is one who is a man of complete integrity behold an Israeli indeed a man of complete integrity and James put that last in the list but they're last on the list and that's what we ought to be we may have all the other qualities at the beginning of verse 17 but if we are not sincere then all that we just said or that I've just said will make absolutely no sense whatever that we say pure peaceable gentle open the reason full of mercy good fruits impartial all that must be cut off by sincerity integrity that is highly valued by

Jesus that is the pinnacle of all heavenly wisdom according to James that ought to be the case for us all if we are believers in Christ that ought to characterize our lives and if we are here this morning and we are not a believer in Christ if we are not following followers of the Lord Jesus Christ then this is what we need we need the Lord Jesus Christ Wisdom according to James but Wisdom according to Proverbs is personified we see later on the New Testament is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Wisdom personified. We need him. We need him.

If we are not converted. If we are not a believer in Christ. If we are not Christians. We need Jesus Christ. In our lives. We need him to change us. We need to improve. we need Jesus Christ in our lives. We need him to change us. We need to trust in him for what he did on Calvary and all he's doing even now by his spirit.

We need him. And if you're not a believer, trust in him. Flee to the cross of Christ. Hurl yourself at the foot of the cross. Say, be merciful to me, a sinner, and trust in him.

And then seek that wisdom that comes from above, that is pure, peaceable, gentle, open reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

[45:07] May the Lord bless these few thoughts to our hearts. And we will conclude in singing from Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is all about the word of God.

As you know, Psalm 119, part 3, in verse 158, verse 1724. The entire Psalm 119 is all about the word of God. And where else can we get wisdom?

Where else can we get true heavenly wisdom? The only place we can get that from is from the word of God. And so we'll sing. Psalm 119, verse 17, Do good to me and I will live until the end of verse 24.

Your statutes, your word, are my great delight. Why? For their counselors to me. We need that. And we shall stand to sing if we're able. You go to me and I will live.

Your servant will obey your word. Open my eyes that I may see.

[46:26] Great wonders in your Lord. I am a stranger on the earth.

Do not hide your commands from me. Consumplify longing in my soul.

Because you're lost, I learn to see. You are free, beauty, in the soul.

And there, curse you from your priests and sway. Reveal from me, content and scorn.

For all your statutes I obey. For all your statutes I obey. Though rulers walk to heart my name.

[47:51] I will make these days on your decree. And there, curse you from your statutes I obey.

For they are counselors to me. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[50:13] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[54:13] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
[58:45] Thank you.