

8. The only thing that is pure, **unalloyed**, unadulterated, and flawless is the Word of God. Its purity is the summum bonum which in Latin is the term for supreme good.
9. First of all, the Word of God is established as the resource of wisdom. What it **produces** follows beginning with the adverb of time and order, **ἔπειτα** (*épeita*): “**then.**” It is followed by categories of wisdom that are in stark contrast to the vicious comments James denounced earlier in the chapter.
10. To highlight each of the six honorable virtues that follows, we shall present them independently in a list of James’s “pure mental attitudes and applications.”
 1. The **first** in the list is the predicate adjectives is, **εἰρηνικός** (*eirēnikós*): “**peaceful.**” It refers to being copacetic with a harmonious relationship and may be defined as “**inner tranquility of the soul.**”

James 3:17 is in line with LXX [Septuagint] usage: Wisdom is first of all pure (*hagnós*: not stained, because it comes from God), very “peaceful (*eirēnikós*),” that is, judging from verse 16, opposed to disorder and intrigues.¹

A soul with inner peace maintains a relaxed mental attitude. Incoming flack is managed on an increasingly efficient basis by the inculcation of divine viewpoint.

This principle is articulated by Solomon in Proverbs 23:7, “As a person thinks in his soul, so is he.”

The power of divine viewpoint and its application is aggrandized by the consistent inculcation of the Word of God which enables the believer to apply biblical truth to life and circumstances.

Hebrews 4:12 The Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)

The spiritual ability to think is in stark contradistinction to things common in *cosmos diabolicus*. It functions on thoughts, decisions, and actions that maintain a peaceful soul in a cosmic environment.

¹ Ceslas Spicq, “εἰρηνικός” in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:437.



2. The **second** category of pure wisdom is the adjective, **ἐπιεικής** (*epieikḗs*) which is translated in the NASB, NET, and KJV with the word, “gentle,” while the NIV opts for “considerate.” Further research expounds on these two to a much broader degree.

For those in positions of superiority, [the noun] *epieíkeia* is an easy-going quality that moderates the inflexible severity of wrath,² a fairness that corrects anything that might be odious or unjust in the strict application of the letter of the law.

Hellenistic *epieíkeia* emphasizes first of all moderation and just measure or, as we say today, “equilibrium.” This is why in Greece *anēr epieikḗs* has always meant “honest man” or “virtuous man.” It is also the quality of those who share in the wisdom from on high (James 3:17).

The person characterized by *epieíkeia* is reasonable, a respector of social norms. Sometimes the emphasis is on exactitude, loyalty, and fidelity in the accomplishment of a task; much more often on mildness; hence its connection with goodness, peace, (James 3:17), and mildness-leniency. So it becomes apparent that Hellenistic *epieíkeia* is first and foremost a virtue of the heart—open, conciliatory, and trusting toward one’s neighbor. Not only is it opposed to wickedness and to violence, but being thoroughly mild and kind, it can be persuaded, and bends and even resigns itself when wronged.

Finally, New Testament *epieíkeia* is not only moderation and measure, but goodness, courtesy, generosity. Furthermore, it suggests a certain amiability, good grace.³

I have underlined several words that seem to size up the character trait expressed by *epieikḗs*, but the one that seems best is found in the context of natural law: “**equitable**: dealing fairly and equally with all concerned.” (MWCD, 11th edition).

² “*epieíkeia*: Séneca defines *clēmētīa* [Latin] as “mildness demonstrated by a superior to an inferior.”

³ Spicq, “ἐπιείκεια, ἐπιεικής, in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2:35–38.



3. The **third** virtue is **εὐπειθής** (*eupeithḗs*), translated, “reasonable.” The King James Version translates this word with the phrase, “easy to be entreated.” That’s not quite it. This word is used for submission to military discipline in particular and it generally refers to being easily persuaded, willing to yield, and to be compliant. Here is some background:

In Plato, it refers to the person who obeys the laws, and in Josephus, disciplined troops; but this obedience becomes more flexible in Philo and especially in Epíctētus [Ἐπίκτητος], where the wise person is open to reasonable persuasion and, being deferent, characterized by complaisance (*eupeítheia*) [disposition to please or comply]. Thus, *eupeítheia* in the first century implies goodwill and mutual understanding: it refers not to passive obedience but to an inclination to accept suggestions and conform to them willingly.

The connection with *epieikḗs* in James 3:17 suggests that *eupeithḗs* should have a coordinate meaning: wisdom is open to reasons that are supplied; it is willing to be convinced, agrees to follow instructions, strives to be conciliatory. The papyri confirm this meaning: “to be in agreement, to be satisfied.”⁴

Use of the word, “reasonable” is fine to define *eupeithḗs*, but the better word to capture the essence of *eupeithḗs* is the adjective, **affable**, which “implies easy approachability and readiness to respond pleasantly to requests or proposals.”⁵

4. The **fourth** entry includes two concepts: **(1)** full of mercy, and **(2)** good fruits. We will take them up independently.

The phrase “full of mercy” includes the ablative of source of the noun, **ἔλεος** (*éleos*): “mercy.” “Full” is the descriptive adjective, **μεστός** (*mestós*). This describes the person’s full investment in the principle of mercy.

The concept is the mental attitude of compassion:

Éleos is the feeling of one who is moved by the sight of another’s suffering and in a way shares in it: compassion.

⁴ Ibid., “εὐπειθής,” 2:129–130.

⁵ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2014), s.v. “affable.”



Aristotle defines *éleos* as “a pain following upon the sight of a destructive or painful evil that strikes a person who does not deserve it and that one might expect to suffer oneself or see one’s own dear ones suffer.”⁶

The phrase, “full of mercy,” refers to the status quo of wisdom in the soul of a mature believer which in this case exemplifies the power maximum doctrine produces in opposition to the various verbal sins vilified by James in James 3:1–16.

When a believer’s wisdom is so cultivated that no matter what the circumstance, he is able to respond with divine viewpoint. Consequently, when a believer applies principles of divine viewpoint to difficult situations common to human life, he is displaying the virtues of mercy, sympathy, commiseration, and **compassion**.

The sequence continues with the application of this compassion:

5. The **fifth** phrase, “good fruits,” is a way to describe the volitional decision to execute the mental attitude of compassion which results in divine good.

First is the adjective **ἀγαθός (*agathós*)**: “good,” which is both beneficial and benevolent and describes the resultant production of “good works.”

These good works are mentioned next by the plural noun **καρπός (*karpós*)**: “the metaphorical use of the term to describe the production of the believer enabled by “the Holy Spirit.”

In this context, the **production of divine good** is made functional by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s enabling power combined with application from a doctrinal inventory results in putting grace into action.

Divine Good may be defined as those Christian works and Christian service which are acceptable to God and His standards. They must originate from the grace of God under the filling of the Holy Spirit and spiritual growth.

Here are some pertinent principles on the believer’s production of divine good:

Principles on Divine Good Compared with Human Good

1. The Greek word for “good” is **ἀγαθός (*agathós*)** and in Scripture it has two prevalent applications, divine good and human good.

⁶ Ibid., “ἐλεος,” 1:471–472.

