

COUNTERFEIT WISDOM

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“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”

James 3:15

There is more than one source of wisdom. This verse is part of a larger context that describes the wisdom of God. Here we are told that there are sources of wisdom that do not descend “from above.”

Our text details sources of what we might refer to as COUNTERFEIT WISDOM. God is not the author of this wisdom. Wisdom that gives rise to strife and envy is not from Heaven. Wisdom that is prideful and quarrelsome did not originate with God. This COUNTERFEIT WISDOM is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” In looking at these three individual sources of COUNTERFEIT WISDOM, we see that they answer to the three spiritual enemies of man: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We should beware of wisdom that is “earthly.” Wisdom that has its origin in this world is not godly wisdom. We could also call this “worldly wisdom.” Earthly wisdom has only this life in view, not life in the world to come. Worldly wisdom would tell us to think primarily of ourselves, justifying greed instead of sharing our resources to win others for our Savior. We are also warned to recognize and reject wisdom that is “sensual.” Sensual wisdom is “natural wisdom.” Just because something seems right to us is not an indication that it is true wisdom.

We need to be seekers of the truth, not seekers of what we naturally prefer. Too many times, people are deceived by sensual, or fleshly, wisdom. The Bible tells us to “cease from thine own wisdom” (Proverbs 23:4). We cannot afford to make decisions or

determinations based on our personal appetites or passions. We are to be governed by the spiritual, rather than the natural. Then we are told to avoid wisdom that is “devilish.” This wisdom is demonic; it is actually inspired by demons. Satan wants to deceive and confuse by offering COUNTERFEIT WISDOM. We see an example of this when Peter sought to prevent Jesus from going to the cross. Jesus said, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Matthew 16:23). The devil was convincing Peter, with false wisdom, that the cross should be avoided. This directly contradicted God’s true wisdom. The world, the flesh, and the devil offer wisdom, but it is not the true wisdom of God. We can recognize COUNTERFEIT WISDOM because it is not in agreement with the Word of God.