

## James 3:13-15

### “Faith works through wisdom”

#### I. Intro

#### II. Vs. 13-15 Wisdom’s origin

In the first part of chapter three James warned about presuming to be teachers and one of the allures to those who would be so ambitious is so that others would think them wise.

First we need to recognize the difference between wisdom and knowledge. *Knowledge enables people to take things apart, but wisdom enables people to put things back*

*together that have been taken apart!* The reason for these words by James is that those

who are so inclined can cause far more damage if what they teach goes beyond

knowledge to worldly wisdom instead of Godly wisdom. But how can we know?

- What is wisdom?
- Is it just conformity to truth?
- Is it just accumulation of facts?

*How can the follower of Christ determine if what they are hearing from the pulpit or reading in Christian material is mere human intellectual brilliance, impressive*

*knowledge and recall of information or biblical truth?* James makes the point in this

section that wisdom is essential for a godly life, but such wisdom doesn’t come from the

world and can only come from God. *Godly wisdom is inspired depth-perception that*

*enables a person to hear what God hears and see what God sees. It is a vertical thrust of*

*the mind and heart of God into the horizontal level of human affairs.* James had said

that the use of our speech reflects the condition of our heart and now he informs his

readers that only Godly wisdom can offer spiritual maturity to the believer. *Foresight is*

**always better than hindsight, but INSIGHT is always the best!** James tells us that there are three contrasts between human wisdom and Godly wisdom that we can use:

- I. Its ORIGIN
- II. Its OPERATION
- III. Its OUTCOME

This morning we will examine the contrasting origins of the two types of wisdom in the world today.

## II. Vs. 13-15 Wisdom's ORIGIN

In verse 13 James writes that wisdom's chief characteristic is visible in our behavior not our words as it is seen in our works described as the, "**meekness**" **of wisdom**. Meekness does not mean "*weakness*" in the Greek. Instead it describes a stallion who has been broken so that its power is now under control. The meek person doesn't selfishly assert themselves to be the center of attention instead they want only God to receive the glory. Their heart is that God's visibility would be made clearer through their invisibility! For the sake of continuity, it will be necessary to take apart the passage to enable us to better examine James points and contrasts, the first of which is the contrasting origins of the two types of wisdom. In verses 15 and 17 James describes the two wisdoms that he is going to contrast as one comes "**from above**" and the other does not but is instead in verse 15, "**earthly, sensual, demonic**". We must not confuse the world's knowledge with the world's wisdom. There is a great deal of knowledge that man has discovered and we have all benefitted from it. But there hasn't been anything of value from the world's wisdom. **Man may unlock the secrets of the universe, but he doesn't know what to do with what he has unlocked.** It seems looking at the world's wisdom that whatever they

have “*discovered*” has turned against them. Over a 100 years ago poet Henry David Thoreau warned that we had, “***improved our means to unimproved ends!***”

1. **God’s wisdom**: God’s word tells us plainly what the difference it has with the world’s wisdom:
  - a. **Results**: 1 Cor. 1:18, 20 “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*”  
“*Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? The disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*”
  - b. **Appeal**: 1 Cor. 2:14 “*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” Man’s wisdom comes from “**reason**”, while God’s wisdom comes from “**revelation**” and the difference that makes is that man’s wisdom comes to nothing while God’s wisdom will endure forever!
2. **World’s wisdom**: To further distinguish the contrast James reveals three things about humanities wisdom in verse 15 calling it “**earthly, sensual and demonic**”. What is interesting to note is the direct correlation between James words here with regards to the origin of the world’s wisdom with Paul’s words on what guides fallen humanity in Eph. 2:1-3 “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*” We have three enemies

the (*world system, our fallen nature and satan*) and according to James these are the same three areas that worldly wisdom is aimed at our weaknesses!

A. *Earthly: The world's wisdom concerns itself with words; God's wisdom*

*concerns itself with works*. In Rom 1:21-22 Paul wrote of the contrast saying that, “*Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*” The Tower of Babel is an example of man’s attempt to reach God through his own wisdom and result was the same as it is today, confusion!

- The world’s wisdom operates through the human mind by man’s intelligence; God’s wisdom operates by the Holy Spirit’s words.
- The world’s wisdom brings foolishness and ignorance of God; God’s wisdom brings knowledge that leads to salvation and eternal life.

B. *Sensual*: The Greek word here is where we get our word for “*psychology*” and is contrasted with *God's wisdom being spiritual!* Thus, the comparison is the *soulish wisdom that appeals to the emotions and feelings* verses that which is of *the Holy Spirit and appeals to our new redeemed heart*. Prov 14:12 reminds us that, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*” There are **four things that are always true about the natural man:**

1. Their spirit is dead therefore they cannot respond to God.
2. They are against the things of God.
3. The things of God are foolish to them.

4. They lack the ability to examine spiritual things. They are like a blind man in an art gallery.

**These four truths about the fallen nature of man make them vulnerable to worldly wisdom and contrary to Godly wisdom.**

- C. **Demonic**: The use of the word “*demonic*” reveals who’s behind it all. Jesus said of satan in John 8:44 that, “*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*” People have been believing his lies since he told Adam and Eve that they would be like God in wisdom if they disobeyed Him. The amazing truth is satan has been using the same lie to the same destruction of souls ever since. Satan’s wisdom is the dominating influence upon human thought in the world. In entertainment, universities, and media he is the leader and purveyor of human wisdom as he influences the vast majority of humanity to hell! The Apostle John in 1 John 2:15-17 tells how this wisdom operates in fallen humanity saying, “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*” It is in “**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**” that satan’s wisdom makes its appeal. Saints, the wisdom of the world belongs to the old life NOT

the new life in Christ! Paul pointed out this truth in his letter to the Ephesians saying in 2:1-5 that, *“you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*

Next week we will continue our examination of the contrast between worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom by looking at the contrast in operation and outcomes of these two different types of wisdom. We will see four distinct characteristics of the world’s wisdom and nine characteristics of Godly wisdom. Lastly, we will compare the outcomes. Our study will better enable us to determine which of these two types of wisdom we are listening too.