

Strength for Today

“Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing” (James 3:16).

False wisdom ruins lives.

Renowned eighteenth-century theologian Jonathan Edwards said the following about the effect of the Fall on man:

Sin, like some powerful astringent, contracted his soul to the very small dimensions of selfishness; and God was forsaken, and fellow-creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself, and became totally governed by narrow and selfish principles and feelings. Self-love became absolute master of his soul, and the more noble and spiritual principles of his being took wings and flew away.

Edwards’s analysis certainly agrees with what James is saying: man is self-centered (cf. James 3:14, 16). Where self-centeredness exists, there will be negative results. One such result is “disorder” (v. 16). The term refers to disorder that comes out of instability and chaos. Earthly wisdom will never produce harmony or love because it’s proud and self-indulgent. It destroys intimacy, love, unity, and fellowship, and in its place brings discord and chaos. You can see the result of earthly wisdom all over our world today. Anger, bitterness, lawsuits, and divorces are just part of the legacy.

“Every evil thing” also results from earthly wisdom (v. 16). The phrase speaks of something worthless or vile. Greek scholar R.C. Trench said it contemplates evil, “not so much that either of active or passive malignity, but rather of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain ever coming forth from it.” The Greek word translated “thing” implies that false wisdom produces nothing of any practical value. At its best it produces worthless things; at its worst it produces vile things.

Which kind of life do you prefer? One that is characterized by love and unity, or by instability and chaos? A life with fulfillment and meaning, or with emptiness? If you want a life that satisfies and has eternal value, choose divine wisdom!

Suggestions for Prayer

Thank God for giving you His Word so you can know how to live wisely and avoid the negative results of man’s wisdom.

For Further Study

Following human wisdom leads only to evil. Memorize Proverbs 4:27 to help you stay on the path of true wisdom.

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