

“THE WISDOM OF GOD”
Psalm 112:1-10, Matthew 5:13-20, I Corinthians 2:1-16
February 8 & 9, 2020

Many times “we try to hide our lack of wisdom. Like the man who bought a yacht. His wife was nervous because he had no experience in sailing. But he knew he could handle it and so for weeks he practiced in the harbor before taking it out to sea. Finally, he talked his nervous wife into going on the yacht with him. Gingerly she stepped aboard. Out into the harbor they headed and he tried to put her at ease. He said, ‘Honey, look, I practiced enough in this harbor to know where every rock, every reef, every sand bar is.’ At that very moment a huge hidden rock beneath the surface made a large crunching sound from stem to stern. ‘There,’ he said with a sheepish grin, ‘is one of them going by right now.’”¹

God invites us to Search For Wisdom so that we might find the hidden treasures that the Lord our God has for us. Not rocks that would sink our boat, but treasures that will enhance and better our lives. The harder we have to hunt for something, the more valuable it becomes to us and the more precious it is for us to have in our possession.

“When speaking about wisdom, the Bible says, ‘*Seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasure*’ (Proverbs 2:4). As we all know silver is not an element that just lies all over on top of the ground. Silver and hidden treasures are located underneath the ground. They require digging in order to obtain it. The fact that the treasures are hidden implies that they are not on top of the ground, obvious to the casual eye, ready for anyone just to pick up. What makes silver and hidden treasures so valuable is that they are not common, ordinary, everyday minerals available to everyone. They’re not just available to pick up – you have to **WORK** to gain it. And the same is true about wisdom

“Why would God **not** make wisdom available for anyone to pick up easily? Because it’s too valuable. God doesn’t want folks to pick up wisdom if they don’t intend on using it in a good way. He has placed wisdom in a hidden treasure [below the surface] for those who really want it and who will

¹ (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 612)

use it to bring about the glory of God. Just like people who truly desire to find gold or silver don't mind digging and working to find it, wisdom is only to be found by people who value it enough to search for it."² Wisdom is **WORTH** the effort to attain it for our lives so that we can work for the glory of God.

And we started talking about this last week when we learned about the message of the cross. The cross of Jesus Christ is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:18). Today I want to continue this discussion about God's wisdom so that we might become aware of what it can do for us in our lives.

First, God's Wisdom Is A Benefit To All Who Find It, and we see that in the lesson of Psalm 112. We see quickly in the first few verses (1-3) that obedience to God's **COMMANDS** brings family prosperity because God delights to bless those who seek Him and follow His ways. God delights to prosper all those who will see His ways as beneficial for their lives and give in 100% to following His commands. When we obey God's commands, we demonstrate our loyalty to God and show that He is the most important person in our lives. So why wouldn't God bless those who seek Him and follow Him? Throughout the Old Testament we see how those who delight in following God's ways often become outstanding examples of God's rich blessings.

And in the next few verses of Psalm 112(4-6), we see that following God's wisdom brings peace and **HAPPINESS**. When we have God's wisdom, we become a light in the midst of our dark world because the way we live impacts the lives of those around us. When we have wisdom in us, we touch the lives of those who are hurting, bringing mercy to them. When we have wisdom, we show kindness to the lonely and we treat others with respect and dignity. And as we do these things, our lives are content and happy. As we use the wisdom of God in our everyday lives, we demonstrate the love of God to those around us by the way that we live and move and have our being. When wisdom is in us, every part of our life exudes peace and happiness.

And in the final few verses of Psalm 112, we see that the wisdom of God builds **CONFIDENCE**

² (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago/ Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 340, #1028)

and faithfulness. Wisdom gives us the confidence we need in the face of bad news, enabling us to trust in the Lord for His protection and guidance. Wisdom defeats worry and fear because we know that God is in control of all things, to bring about His glory and fulfill His purpose. Wisdom then enables us to be generous with the blessings the Lord has entrusted to us so that we might make a difference in the lives of those around us who are in need. Wisdom guides our hearts and our minds so that we might become outstanding leaders within our own communities. Wisdom indeed has great benefits to us as we learn to live in it.

You see, wisdom is the byproduct of knowledge and understanding. Knowledge is comprehending the true nature of a thing being considered. Understanding is the enlightened purpose of the truth of that knowledge. So when we obtain knowledge and come to understand it fully, wisdom is the end result, bringing guidance and direction to all those who allow it to live in them and then use it to bring God glory and honor.

And that is reflected in the teachings of Jesus. When we develop knowledge and understanding, God's Wisdom Is Visible To Those Around Us. People see it in our lives. They perceive that we have been given knowledge and they see that we understand the purpose of that knowledge, so wisdom becomes visible to others in unique and special ways.

In our Gospel lesson of Matthew 5:13-20, Jesus lifts up a couple of ways that wisdom becomes perceived by those around us. He says first, "*You are like salt for all mankind...*" (5:13). Jesus is telling us that Wisdom adds depth and **FLAVOR** to life. Have you ever eaten a food that doesn't have enough salt in it? It's bland, sometimes hard to eat and therefore difficult to stomach. But when salt is added to the food, WOW, the difference in the taste! Salt brings out the flavors in foods that would otherwise be tasteless.

Wisdom in the life of a person does the very same thing. Wisdom transforms situations from being stale and even abrasive into comfortable and wholesome environments. Wisdom even protects us from certain encounters, advising us to not even be there in the first place. Much like salt brings healing

to an open wound, wisdom can also save us and protect us from the harmful things of life that strive to make us miserable. So wisdom is like salt for us to make a difference to all those around us.

But if wisdom is not a part of our lives, we often fall prey to temptations, leading us into sinful and hurtful things that strive to destroy us. Without wisdom in our lives, we fall victim to the dangers of the world's ways that corrupt and pervert and distort the things of God. Without wisdom we seek only our own satisfaction and our own desires. Without wisdom, we look at life in a "what's in it for me" attitude. Wisdom enables us to look beyond our own self to see the needs of those around us.

Jesus' other example of how wisdom becomes visible to those around us is explained like this, *"You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16).

I've spoken on what light does in our lives just a few weeks ago. Light exposes the dangers around us so that we are protected from them. Light guides our lives so that we can stay on the right path of God's love. Light is also very attractive to those around us, helping them to find guidance and direction from the darkness of our world, too.

Just like that, Wisdom **SHINES** out like a light for all to see, opening eyes to dangers around us, protecting us from making poor decisions, guiding us along God's ways, and influencing others to do the same. Wisdom exposes the possibilities in all situations, enabling wise decisions to be made. Wisdom, like light, chases the darkness away and brings hope and peace.

So God's wisdom is like lotion to dry, chapped hands. It's like soothing drops to itchy, tired eyes. Wisdom is like water to parched lips. It comforts like a warm blanket and it acts like salve on an open wound. Wisdom is the strong hand catching one who is about to fall. It's like a map, giving direction to the lost. Wisdom is even like a life raft to those who have become abandoned or marooned in the dangerous seas of life. Wisdom is the counselor providing truth to the wandering.

And God's wisdom brings eternal **BENEFITS**, too. Wisdom reminds us of the ways of God, and calls out to us to follow them rather than immersing ourselves in the ways of the world. Wisdom divulges the truth in all situations, bringing to light the consequences of decisions. Wisdom encourages obedience to the truth of God, and influencing others to do the same. Wisdom leads us to follow Jesus so that we might obtain eternal life beyond this world. Wisdom invites us to do the hard work of being so different than the rest of this world as we adhere and cling to the Savior, Jesus.

And that is the truth behind Paul's words to us found in I Corinthians 2:1-16. Listen to what Paul says about wisdom. (READ I Corinthians 2:1-16).

Now Paul has just gotten done telling the people of the Corinthian church that *God has made Christ Jesus to be our wisdom. By Him we are put right with God; we become God's holy people and are set free*" from the bondage to sin and death (I Cor. 1:30). As we trust in Jesus and let Him live in us, we find wisdom living in us. And we come to understand that God's Wisdom Is Given To Us By The Holy Spirit.

So Paul explains and reminds the people how he arrived to them. He didn't puff himself up and think that he was better than they were. He didn't use language that they didn't understand, but spoke in common, ordinary, everyday language so that others could comprehend and make sense out of. He didn't come into Corinth thinking he had all the answers to the political problems, the economic problems or the military problems. He came simply, just like one of them, seeking only to know one thing – Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried and risen again. That was his purpose going to Corinth, to share this great good news of what God had done for the world through the Messiah, Jesus (2:2).

Paul even went to Corinth uneasy as to how the people would receive him. He had already received a variety of "welcomes" into other cities, and had experienced a lot of persecution by the leaders for presenting Jesus Christ to them. So Paul arrived in Corinth with some fear and trepidation, uncertain as to how they would receive him (2:3).

And when he began to teach the people, Paul realized that the wisdom of this world is

FLAWED, so he had to approach the people carefully. He didn't use craftily constructed arguments full of human wisdom skillfully delivered to persuade them (2:3). Rather Paul spoke in the wisdom of God demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit. He wasn't boastful or arrogant, but boldly preached the truths of the Lord Jesus, laying out the meaning of His presence here on the Earth with us. Paul wanted to separate himself from the philosophers of the age who spoke so far above the people that they could not understand what was said. Paul spoke simply and yet powerfully so that as the people came to faith in Jesus it would not be because of human wisdom, but on the power of God (2:5).

Through his own personal experience, Paul shared the great knowledge of the Scriptures all lifting up Jesus as the Messiah of the world, the One sent by God to bring Salvation to the world from the consequences of living against God's ways. Paul had once lived according to the wisdom of the world, even to the point of striving to gain God's approval by being a Pharisee, whose strict adherence to the Law blinded him from seeing the true identity of Jesus. He was even one who consented to putting to death those who would follow Jesus because he did not understand yet God's great secret of the Messiah. Even with his great learning, Paul had missed the acceptance of God's gift of eternal life because he had trusted in human wisdom rather than God's wisdom.

But when Jesus finally confronted him, and convinced him that He was truly the Messiah as Paul and his companions were headed to Damascus, Paul came to understand the purpose of the knowledge he had from the Scriptures. He came to know that Jesus is Lord of All, and that it is only through His death on the cross that sin was defeated and in His resurrection we now have the pathway that leads to eternal life. It is this "secret" wisdom of God that brings **LIFE** to all who will believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Savior of the world, who takes away the sins of all people when they believe in Him. Human wisdom could not produce this truth, for human wisdom, reasoned by the leaders of the people, is what led them to rejected Jesus as the Messiah (2:8). So it is God's wisdom that brings light to the truth of how Jesus brought life to the world, through His death and resurrection.

God had made possible what no one could ever have thought was possible. God enabled

humanity to escape the consequences of sin (which is death) through the most unreasonable way – a perfect sacrifice being made by one perfect Man (the Son of God) to satisfy the punishment of all people, if they would but believe in Him and trust in Him as the atonement of their sin (2:9).

Then we see that it is the Holy Spirit who **EXPOSES** the wisdom of God to us. This mystery of God's great gift of love for us is made known to the people by the Holy Spirit (2:10). But the Holy Spirit's sole purpose is to lift up Jesus Christ so that we can believe in Him. So before we can receive the wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit, we must first receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. True, the Holy Spirit works on us and prods us to come to know Jesus before we become believers. True, He can move in the lives of people, even non-believers, to accomplish the plans of God. But for us to know the wisdom of God, we must first receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and let Him become the Lord of our life.

So, it is true then, that we can FIND wisdom only through the Holy Spirit working in us as we receive the knowledge of Jesus' work here on the Earth, and come to understand fully that it is only through Jesus that we have eternal life. God's wisdom is only for those who put their trust and faith in Jesus. He will not give us His wisdom if we continue to reject Him and live according to the ways of the world. It would be counter-productive for God to give someone His wisdom and then they either refuse to use it for the glory of God, or even worse, they use it against God's people.

The Holy Spirit, being one with God the Father and being one with Jesus Christ, knows even the DEPTHS of God's purpose in bringing this gift of salvation to the world (2:11). The Holy Spirit is omniscient, meaning He knows all things, even the depths of God, and He is the One who enlightens the hearts of men and women, boys and girls, so that they might come to know Jesus and understand His work for us on the cross (2:12). We can try to figure it out on our own, but our human wisdom will not enable us to come to know and understand Jesus' purpose. Only as we give ourselves up to the Spirit's guidance and empowerment can we find God's wisdom.

The Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom of God. Spiritual truths can only come to those who have

received the Holy Spirit. If we do not have the Holy Spirit in us, there is no way that we can receive the spiritual wisdom of God. Human wisdom cannot make sense out of God's wisdom. God's wisdom is nonsense to those who are without the Spirit in their lives. So, in order to grow deeper in our understanding of who God is, we first have to receive Jesus into our hearts, and then we can receive the wisdom of the Holy Spirit with regard to God (2:14). It would be like me trying to figure out the details of jet propulsion, having never been trained in it. Unless I have that training about how a jet engine works, there is no way for me to begin to understand the dynamics of jet propulsions. And unless I have the Holy Spirit in my life, there is no way for me to grasp and understand the depths of God's wisdom.

Three steps are required to get the wisdom of God: Step 1 – receive Jesus Christ as Savior. Step 2 – receive the Holy Spirit. Step 3 – receive God's wisdom. Once I receive the wisdom of God, then I will be able to see as God sees, and know the purpose of Salvation. Only then will I be able to “...*judge the value of everything...*” (2:15). Only then can I make sense of the Scriptures in the Bible. It is only those who have the Holy Spirit in their lives who can completely understand the purposes of God. We can have the **MIND** of Christ only through the work of the Holy Spirit (2:16).

So what is the mind of Christ? It is thinking like Jesus thought, seeing each other like Jesus saw those around Him, and understanding the way that Jesus understood the needs we have. The mind of Christ Jesus was not on Himself, as to what He desired or what He looked forward to. Jesus thought only of our well-being, our eternal ransom from the ravages of sin, and accomplishing His Father's work. His desire was to bring us life as we come to know God and give ourselves into His service.

For us to have the mind of Jesus Christ is to first **LOVE** like Jesus loved us so that all may come to know Him through our example, letting our light shine before others so that they can see God through us. Second, to have the mind of Christ means that we **GIVE** like Jesus gave so that all may be saved through Him. In this way we become servants totally sold out for His purpose and for His work.

Receive Jesus, let the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom of God, and then serve with the mind of Christ in all you do to all those around you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN