

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

12.2 What Is God Like?

Part II

The Wisdom of God

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:18-25

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than; men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (I Corinthians 1:22-25)

INTRODUCTION

The Christian teaching is that the root of the confusion and uncertainty which exists in the world today is the craft and power of a spiritual being called by Jesus *"the ruler of this world."* (John 14:30) Aspiring to be as God, Satan was cast from heaven to become the leader of a pantheon of spiritual hosts dedicated to circumventing God's purposes.

Satan's basic sin has become the characteristic sin of all mankind; that is, the sin of pride. It was of old written, *"How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cast down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascent into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."* (Isaiah 14:12-14) In this description of self-exaltation and unabashed pride the course of man's history can be traced. Men today consider themselves to be as wise as God, and in that vaunted wisdom deem it unnecessary to seek the face of God while he may be found. One would suppose that, in the presence of such manifest failure, the human race would have had enough of such folly in which it continues to destroy itself, but such has not been true.

No greater blow to shatter the whole structure of human conceit and to level at a glance the entire figment of man's imagined grandeur can be found than the

words of the ancient apostle, *“the foolishness of God is wiser than man.”* The lesson is sufficiently unmistakable.

We speak today of the only wise God. This same writer, the Apostle Paul, has elsewhere similarly expressed the truth, *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor, and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (I Timothy 1:17) In our Corinthian verses the Apostle Paul evidently expresses himself in a figure of speech when he describes the foolishness of God as, in point of fact, wiser than the wisdom of man, for there is no foolishness in God. He says quite simply that what appears to be foolishness as far as God's relationship to man is concerned, really is wisdom, supreme, eternal wisdom. And what appears among men to be wisdom is really supreme, eternal foolishness. Consider with me, therefore, the only wise. God.

Observe First: The wisdom of God is closely related to the knowledge of God. That is, His knowledge supports His wisdom. We normally differentiate between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is acquired by learning. It is a matter of familiarity with certain data. Wisdom is the utilization of knowledge. When we speak of the wisdom of God we are referring to His perfection whereby the best possible results are obtained with the best possible means. This is a suitable definition. Think with me first about the knowledge of God.

1. God's Knowledge Encompasses Himself and All Things:

Theologians speak often of the omniscience of God. They mean that God possesses all knowledge and that He cannot learn anything. I John 3:20 gives us the truth that God *“knows all things.”* Two rhetorical questions come from the prophet Isaiah concerning this attribute of God. Please see Isaiah 29:15-16 and 40:13-14. In I Corinthians 2:11 the apostle Paul tells us that God knows Himself perfectly. *“For what knoweth (man) the things of man save the Spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man except the Spirit of God.”* God alone knows Himself completely. God's knowledge gathers up everything which conforms to reality. God cannot learn. He already knows.

2. God's Knowledge Is Perfect:

It possesses the quality of perfection. There is no blemish in it. It is not limited in degree as our knowledge is. It is well within the realm of possibility, for instance, that a doctor make a wrong diagnosis. Similarly, a pharmacist can issue an incorrect prescription. You are thus presented

with a wrong medicine. God is incapable of such error. God's understanding is flawless and there is no error in it. This knowledge has to do with our lives. Psalm 139 reads (139:4), *"For there is not a word in my tongue but thou O Lord knowest it altogether."*

3. God's Knowledge Is Inherent:

"Talk no more of so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." (II Samuel 2:3) We were born with no knowledge. There are certain faculties with which we came into this world, to be sure. But, as far as knowledge is concerned, we had a great deal to learn. You were not a philosopher at birth. You were not acquainted with language at birth. But God, by Himself, is possessed of this knowledge. It belongs to Him. It is part of Him. It comes from within His essential being. God has not acquired this knowledge. It is His, simply by virtue of the fact that He is God. He knows all spirits, beings, creatures, laws, revelations, causes, thoughts, mysteries, feelings, desires, secrets, and personalities. He is never surprised. He is never caught off guard. He is never placed in an emergency situation. Furthermore, God does not figure or deduct. He knows all things instantly and effortlessly. His knowledge is inherent. See also Hebrews 4:13.

4. God's Knowledge Is Eternal:

Of our Lord Jesus, Peter declares, *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."* (Acts 2:23a) There was not a time when God did not know all things. There is no succession of events so far as the experience of God is concerned. With Him there is no accretion of knowledge because He has it already. It is very difficult for us to grasp this truth, for we know only a small part of what there is to know. God knows all from eternity. See Psalm 39:1-18. *"O Lord, thou has searched me, and known me."*

Now, a word by way of application. This knowledge which God possesses comes to humankind as either a comfort or condemnation. For the person who has something to hide, condemnation is felt. In Psalm 90:8 we are told, *"Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee. Our secret sins are in the light of thy countenance."* Indeed, the omniscience of God is a source of fear to the person who would hide from God for nothing can be hid from Him.

A second application of this truth concerning the knowledge of God is a comfort to those who believe and walk uprightly. Consider:

1. God's Knowledge in a Supportive Sense:

We can be comforted by the realization that God knows our frame. Psalm 103:14 reads, *"He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."* It ought to be a source of encouragement to realize that God knows our limitations. He is not forgetful of our frame, that we are earthen vessels. He does not expect the supernatural of us. When we are tired and do poorly, when we do not do our Work in a way which it should be done, when we do what is less than expected of us because we are tired and worn, God remembers our frame. He knows what we go through.

2. God's Knowledge in a Remunerative Sense:

That is to say, God is just in rewarding the good. Those who hear His voice and do not harden their hearts but obey His command to believe and turn in faith to Christ, those who live their lives in conformity to God's Word as an expression of their gratitude, these have experience of God's thoughtful remuneration. While the ungodly seem to prosper now, yet in the counsels of eternity, every seeming injustice will be shown for what it is. God will distribute rewards to those who fear Him. See Hebrews 6:10.

3. God's Knowledge in a Defensive Sense:

In I Corinthians 4:3.4 we read, *"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. But He that judgeth me is the Lord."* The point is that no one can accuse me before God falsely and make it stick. God knows if the accusation be false or true. God knows the truth of any given matter and will not be taken in by slander or tale bearing. Though we may be slandered on earth, we may rest assured that the God who knows all things will deal justly to defend the righteous.

4. God's Knowledge in an Elective Sense:

Finally, learn one more thing. Be assured that no weakness can alienate you from the God who has called you to Himself. Consider the words of Isaiah 54:10, *"For the mountains shall depart and the hills moved, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed, saith the God that hath mercy on thee."* Or, reflect upon the words of Isaiah 48:8-9, *"Yea, thou heardest not, yea thou knewest not; yea from the time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously."*

I knew that you were called a transgressor from the time of your birth. But for my name's sake will I defer mine anger and for my praise will I refrain from thee. I will not cut thee off." God is saying, "I knew all about you before I called you to myself. But no weakness of yours will ever alienate you from me. I knew all about you before you became associated with my name."

5. God's Knowledge in an Attentive Sense:

A favorite verse of mine is found in Hebrews 4:15, *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* The genius of the incarnation is that God is not some far off deity. God not only knows about the loneliness we feel, the temptations we battle, the doubts we face, but He has faced these problems experientially. He knows what it is to be hungry, alone, hated, rejected, and misunderstood. The God who knew all of these things from eternity as a matter of knowledge, knows them also in His experience when He became flesh. We may be assured that when no one understands the pain we feel, God knows and is with us every step of the way.

In concluding our thoughts upon the knowledge of God let us say that His knowledge is that perfection where He is entirely unique, knowing all things possible and actual in one eternal and simple act. What is actual has to do with objects of knowledge. The impossible or self-contradictory are not viable objects of knowledge so that we may say that God does not know how to make an old man in a second or to make square circles. Now, the utilization of such knowledge brings us to the wisdom of God. Someone has defined the wisdom of God as "that perfection whereby He produces the best possible results with the best possible means." We may think in terms of God's creative wisdom and God's redemptive wisdom.

I. THE CREATIVE WISDOM OF GOD:- *"In Wisdom Hast Thou Made Them All."*

Psalms 19:1, 104:24-25 speak of the fact that this old world has the stamp of God upon it. The land, sea, sky, winter, summer, bird and beast provide a thundering chorus demanding God's wisdom in creation. It is not difficult to show from astronomy, biology and other disciplines of science, the wisdom of God as displayed in nature. However, philosophy is quick to remind us that unless there is a universal truth over these particulars, there is no wonder and no meaning to

them. Jean-Paul Sartre follows this line of reasoning with the statement, "If you have a finite point and it has no infinite reference point, then that finite point is absurd." Unhappily, that is where he finds himself, an absurd particular in the midst of a world of absurd particulars. We have so learned the Scripture. Psalm 19:1, *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork."* Of course, the crowning evidence of God's wisdom in creation could be man himself. Symmetrical in design, compact, functional and rational, the human body is the house of a million marvels.

II. THE REDEMPTIVE WISDOM OF GOD: - "Christ, The Wisdom Of God."

The redemptive wisdom of God is seen in the incarnation, the atonement, the miracle of the new birth, the strong resurrection of Christ from the dead, the final overthrow of evil and the final reign of Jesus Christ. Little wonder Paul exclaimed, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed onto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom he glory for ever. Amen."*

(Romans 11:33-36)

In I Corinthians 1:30 we are told that Christ is made unto us wisdom. The reason is that in the wisdom of God we have the revelation of Christ as our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Over against this wisdom of God we have the wisdom of man which Paul characterizes as earthly (v.21), sensual (v.22) and devilish (v.19-20).

We will never fully appreciate the wisdom of God until we are willing to turn our backs on our own wisdom. It was the French scientist and religious philosopher, Blaise Pascal, who exclaimed, "The supreme achievement of reason is to bring us to see that there is a limit to reason." The wisdom of God as revealed in Christ and His Calvary cross does not appeal to natural man. It is vulgar and crude. We would substitute a system of ethics or a moral code to achieve salvation, and in our wisdom we forsake the wisdom of God. If only we could learn to rest in God's wisdom. We can do that by taking God at His Word and by trusting the Son who has been sent as a savior.

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