

THE WISDOM OF GOD

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OBC Chapel Sermon

by Paul T. Butler

“. . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God . . .”
I Cor. 1:22-24

“He (Christ) is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption . . .” I Cor. 1:30

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT IS WISDOM?

- A. Some ancient philosophers believed man was incapable of wisdom that it was only attainable by God (Socrates). In fact, Socrates said the wise man will not seek wisdom.
 - 1. Yet, most men have continued to seek wisdom; and all of their own.
 - 2. Many of the ancients were driven to despair, cynicism and hopelessness because they could never find wisdom.
 - 3. THEY LEARNED A LOT OF THINGS, BUT THEY COULD NEVER FIND WISDOM.
- B. Solomon (in Eccl.) probably tried every human source available and concluded that the hope of finding wisdom was vain!
- C. Because wisdom is, as one modern philosopher has said, “Whatever else wisdom may be, it is in some sense an understanding of life.” Abraham Kaplan, in *The Pursuit of Wisdom, The Scope of Philosophy*, pub. Glencoe Press, pg. 16. “Wisdom is a matter of seeing things—but *as they are, not subjectively.*”

II. MAN'S TROUBLE WITH WISDOM

- A. He has been deceived by the devil that wisdom may be found in knowing evil as well as good.
- B. God, man's creator, plainly told man that wisdom was in truth, goodness, humility, righteousness, holiness, purity.
- C. But the devil, Gen. 3, convinced man that if he would partake of the forbidden, he would be as wise as God knowing both good and evil!
- D. The biggest lie of all is, of course, that man is wise if he dispenses with God. Wisdom is found in freedom from any and all divine meddling in man's attempt to enjoy life.
- E. Modern philosophy (from Nietzsche on) declared the death of God and began to construct utopia on earth through science, politics, education and economics, and psychology.
- F. But the "wisdom" of man brought on economic depression, war, illiteracy, exploitation, pollution, and on and on.

H. G. Wells, a believer in the sufficiency of science, had earlier prepared blue prints for Utopia, entitled his *last* book, *Mind at the End of its Tether* and said, "Homo sapiens, as he has been pleased to call himself, is played out."

Others are saying, "Man is a useless passion." "Meaning is found in meaninglessness." "There is no meaning to life."

DISCUSSION

I. POWER OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. It destroys false wisdom which enslaves and destroys people and society.

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1. We have seen through Francis Schaeffer's films the power of the Word and Wisdom of God moving through societies and cultures, redeeming society and individuals.
2. The wisdom of God redeems, regenerates and transforms men and reunites them with their Creator for the blessed end for which He created them (Heb. 2).
3. It converted Pharisees, publicans, harlots, cruel soldiers, pagan philosophers and politicians.
4. It changed homosexuals, thieves, murderers, drunkards, fornicators and liars in the decadent city of Corinth into people after the image of Christ (I Cor. 6:9-11).
5. In the late 1700's the mutineers on the British ship, *Bounty*, landed on Pitcairn Island in the South Seas. With some of the native women they established a settlement which rivaled Sodom and Gomorrah for its iniquity. Sometime later while rummaging through a sailor's chest, the sole survivor of the mutineers, Alexander Smith, came across a Bible. He made it the textbook and standard of conduct for the community. When an American whaler landed there in 1808, the crew found an ideal commonwealth governed by Smith. No illiterates, thieves, liars, drunkards, profaners, adulterers, or murderers cast their stigma on the community, but righteousness and its fruits of happiness blossomed everywhere. A single copy of Scripture transformed that tropical cesspool into a moral paradise.

What has human wisdom, separated from God done for the world? It has created a Nietzsche and a Hitler, a Marx and a Stalin.

Human wisdom, separated from God, decays, degenerates and destroys! It destroys humanness, socialness and nature!

Take all the military force, economic wealth, erudite philosophy, theology aristocracy, cultural refinement and put it all together in one human system and you still do not have power worthy to be compared with the transforming power of the wisdom of God, incarnated in Jesus and inscripturated in the Bible!

TAKE IT IN YOUR HAND, LEARN IT WITH YOUR MIND, RECEIVE IT INTO YOUR HEART AND PROCLAIM IT WITH YOUR LIPS AND LIFE!

B. It builds and sustains Life as God intended Life for man.

1. It restores man to fellowship with His Creator; puts man in harmony with his fellow man; puts man in harmony with creation.
2. Man learns where he came from; what his reason for existence is; and what his destiny is.
3. The wisdom of God explains history; gives purpose and solves the fragmentation of life without God.
4. All the experiences of human life (suffering, pain, evil, joy, goodness, truth, falsehood, ugliness) are inexplicable, frustrating and maddening without the Word of God. All human experience is epitomized and sanctified and explained in the life of the perfect human, Jesus.
5. Christ has given us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Pet. 2). He came and partook of our nature to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2).

A real note found by a real policeman:

“To anyone in the world who cares. Who am I? Why am I living? Where am I going? Life has become stupid and purposeless. Nothing makes sense anymore. The questions I had when I came to college are still unanswered and now I am convinced that there are no answers. There can only be pain

and guilt and despair here. My fear of death and the unknown is far less terrifying than the prospect of the unbearable frustrations, futility, and hopelessness of continued existence.”

Glancing at the lifeless, sheet-draped form on the bed, the officer shrugs his shoulders heavily and turns away. For him it is routine—just another suicide. For the ambulance crew it is routine—just another DOA. And, tragically, it is becoming all too routine all over America, especially on college campuses.

In contrast:

Charlie Powell was student body president of the University of California at Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement and at the height of that crisis made a decision for Christ. Looking back, he said, “for the first time in my life I began to see that, if Jesus Christ were really the person He claimed to be, then He had the answers to my problems as student body president as well as in my own personal life.”

C. It produces unity among believers in the kingdom of God.

1. It is interesting that Paul says it is the wisdom of God alone which brings unity and on the other hand the practice of unity gives evangelistic power to the gospel (1:17).
2. If ever the world is to be convinced of Christ's saving power, the unity of believers will have a great deal to do with it!
3. And yet churchmen and theologians keep insisting on trying everything under the sun to promote unity except the Word of God!
4. The church at Corinth was trying many things to make the congregation a happy, unified, successful,

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respected congregation—BUT WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS CAUSING MORE DIVISION THAN UNITY.

- a. Forming parties and groups following famous men
- b. Showing off how much more sanctified they were than others by comparing miraculous gifts

BUILDINGS, BUDGETS AND BANQUETS . . . PROGRAMS, PROMOTIONAL GIMMICKS AND ENTERTAINMENT ARE NOT UNITY, NOT PROOF OF UNITY, NOR CAN THEY SUSTAIN UNITY. Those things are sometimes good and useful as means, but are also sometimes harmful . . . I've seen more division and fighting over buildings, budgets and programs than I care to recollect.

I've seen church people come to church "fellowship" dinners and separate themselves from other members and never speak because of unconverted hate and unforgiveness!

ONLY THE POWER OF THE CONVERTING WISDOM OF GOD WILL BRING UNITY.

II. PROPOGATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD (Its transmission to men)

- A. The wisdom of God cannot be reduced to and bound by human wisdom!
 1. Not in human art, not in human music, not in human sermons!
 2. None of these dare claim the inspiration or verbal inerrancy of the Holy Spirit!
 3. The primary reason for this is that the wisdom of God—the redemptive program of God—is outside human experience. That a sinless, Incarnate God, should willingly die for a sinful world, is humanly inexplicable.
 4. Not only that, it is moral outrage to human pride. THIS IS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR UNBELIEF . . . FOR RESISTANCE TO THE WORD AND WISDOM OF GOD.
 5. I've quoted so many times in my class, the little excerpt from Bishop Oxenam in Baker's *Dictionary of Theology* article on Atonement, "The doctrine of

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the atonement to me is immoral. . . . That someone else should atone for my sins is immoral. . . . they are my sins, I will atone for them."

6. Of course, through human forms of expression we may point people toward, and motivate them toward the wisdom of God found in His Word, but it is still the plain, uncluttered, Word of God that does the begetting of the Spirit . . . not our eloquence, or expertise.

HUMAN SERMONS, HUMAN MUSIC, HUMAN ART, HUMAN METHODS, COME AND GO, BUT THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER!

B. The wisdom of God is undiscoverable—it *has* to be revealed.

1. God is a Person, an objective person, just like I am a person and you are persons, but God is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, while I am finite.
2. Now finite man cannot even know the mind of another finite person unless that mind is revealed to him either by directly talking and acting in one another's presence or by communicating through writing to one another.

If I should want to know what a man's mind is on some subject, I have to let him tell me. I can't ask anyone else; I can't guess; I can't find it within myself subjectively.

Almost every time we say, "I just have this feeling that this is what God wants me to do," it is usually what we want to do. . . . It is presumptuous to say, "I just have this feeling that this is what so-and-so would want me to do."

HOW MUCH MORE PRESUMPTUOUS FOR US TO SAY, "I HAVEN'T REALLY SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES ABOUT THIS, I JUST FEEL LIKE IT HAS GOD'S APPROVAL!"

NOW THE QUESTION IS, "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD . . ."

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THE NATURAL MAN DOES NOT RECEIVE THE MIND OF CHRIST . . . THAT IS, THE NON-APOSTLE, DOES NOT RECEIVE THE MIND OF CHRIST, IN A REVELATORY MANNER.

All Calvinistic commentaries, I know, say I Cor. 2:14-16 to the unconverted man not able to understand spiritual things . . . that is contextually erroneous as well as unsuited to the teaching of the Bible as a whole.

How can the invitation be to "whosoever will" if one must wait for the miracle of Holy Spirit quickening of the mind before we can understand the gospel message? What is the point of preaching if we must preach and then hope the Holy Spirit will quicken the mind apart from the Word so the man may understand?

THE POINT IS THAT ONLY THE APOSTLES RECEIVED THE REVELATION OF GOD, THE MIND OF GOD, TO TRANSMIT TO ALL MANKIND FOR ALL AGES!

David Lipscomb paraphrases: "Who of you uninspired hath known the mind of God, so as to be joined together with Him? But we inspired men so understand him that we are united in him in teaching his will, we are laborers together with God."

The whole trend and meaning of the chapter is that none could know or teach the will of God by human wisdom. They were dependent upon the revelation made by God's Spirit through the apostles for a knowledge of His will, and only through receiving this could any become co-workers with Him in saving men.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO TEST THAT WHICH CLAIMS TO BE THE MIND OF CHRIST. . . . DOES IT AGREE WITH APOSTOLIC REVELATION. . . . I Jn. 4:1-6

It is one thing to say, "I am persuaded by historico-grammatical study that this is what the biblical author has revealed to be the mind of God. . . ." and quite another thing to say, I've put it before the Lord and He revealed to me that I should do this or that.

C. The wisdom of God is revealed only through the apostles,

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but in human terms . . . in human words

1. The will, the mind, the Person of God came in flesh. Jesus was the Incarnate God, and the Incarnate Holy Spirit. ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GOD-HEAD DWELT IN HIM BODILY!
2. He was the Word of God, Jn. 1:1-18, in human form.
3. The words He spoke were the words of God, the mind of God, the wisdom of God.
4. The words He gave the apostles after He ascended back into heaven, through the work of the Holy Spirit, are just as powerful in redeeming and saving and regenerating as they were when He was here in the flesh. . . .
5. Jn. 6:63; II Pet. 1:3-5 . . . through this word (promises) we are made partakers of the divine nature; II Tim. 3:16-17, they may make the man of God complete! I Jn. 3:24, they complete our fellowship with Christ.

THE WORD OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE APOSTLES IS THE SAME WORD AS THE INCARNATE WORD. . . . IT HAS THE SAME AUTHORITY. IT HAS THE SAME POWER!

WE NEED NO FURTHER REVELATIONS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT! WE DON'T EVEN NEED ANY MORE MIRACLES TO CONFIRM THAT IT IS THE WORD AND WILL AND MIND OF GOD!

Some will say, "There is no power in the words on this printed page of the Bible, the power is in the Person. . . ."

Be careful of such statements. Of course, we do not worship a book, but you can no more separate the words on the Bible's pages from the Person than you can separate the words of any man from his person! THE WORD OF CHRIST IS THE MIND OF CHRIST, THE WORD IS THE POWERFUL, ENERGIZED AGENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION AND SANCTIFICATION!

By the word, Paul begat the Corinthians. The word is the incorruptible seed. The word is implanted. Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth. If we abide in His commandments

we abide in Him and He in us. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The word that I have spoken to you is Spirit and life. The miracle of regeneration occurs through the Word.

WE HAVE LOST RESPECT FOR THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE WORD. . . . Jesus said, "All authority . . . etc., Go and make disciples . . . teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you . . ."

THERE IS AN INSIDIOUS GRASPING FOR HUMAN AUTONOMY IN CHRISTENDOM TODAY THAT IS JUST AS UNBELIEVING AS THAT RATIONALISTIC HUMANISM OF A CENTURY AGO . . .

IT IS SUBJECTIVISM . . . HOW I FEEL . . . MY EXPERIENCE . . . RATHER THAN WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY! You see that evaluates the Bible by my feeling or my experience rather than evaluating my feeling-experience by what the Bible actually says.

Full Gospel Business Men's International lead article claims the whole movement built first on the experiences, testimonies, of alleged, extra-biblical workings of the Holy Spirit . . . and what the Bible says follows that second in importance.

A missionary's paper points out how some of the Pentecostals in Chile teach their people that much study of the Bible is a sin. They are opposing the work of Christ and the Bible correspondence work because they declare that the Holy Spirit will teach them without having to read or study the Word of God!

This leads some to believe that God does all our thinking and deciding for us. We don't even have to decide. But that would keep us immature, moral runts.

III. PURPOSE OF THE WISDOM OF GOD, I Cor. 3-4

A. To build the temple of God by begetting Christians through the gospel and by edifying them through the apostolic doctrine.

1. The purpose of the wisdom of God is NOT:

a. To erect a brain-washed, psyched, structured, non-thinking American corporation!

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A COMMUNITY OF

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OBEDIENT BELIEVERS STRUCTURED ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, BUT UNSTRUCTURED WHERE THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT SPEAK AND FREE TO THINK AND GROW MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST!

- b. To form a society through which man may build a physical, material utopia on this present earth! THE GOSPEL IS PRIMARILY TO REGENERATE MINDS AND SAVE SOULS IN SPITE OF PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. . . . Of course, Christian love wants to relieve physical suffering and wherever it can it should. But first priority is preaching the Word.
 - c. Just to Christianize society to save a human culture. THE WISDOM OF GOD IS TO CALL OUT AND SAVE FROM ALL DYING CULTURES, "A PEOPLE OF HIS OWN WHO ARE ZEALOUS FOR GOOD DEEDS."
 - d. To make men famous. WHEN MEN USE THE PULPIT TO GAIN PERSONAL FAME AND FOLLOWING, THEY EMPTY THE CROSS OF ITS POWER (I Cor. 1:17). HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A TENDENCY TO THINK OF THE CHURCH AND HER LEADERS AS THEY DO HUMAN LEADERS! PAUL FOUGHT THAT IN CORINTH AND EPHEBUS, AND ROME, AND COLOSSAE AND THESSALONICA AND EVERYWHERE HE WENT.
- B. To make men truly wise through humility
- 1. I Cor. 3:18-22. "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you think that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."
 - 2. Humility is the queen of virtues.
 - 3. PRIDE IS THE CAUSE OF UNBELIEF. Unbelief is not because God hasn't given enough evidence. We don't need more evidence, we need MORE HUMILITY.

IF YOU LEAVE THESE CLASSROOMS KNOWING THE BIBLE AND KNOWING HOW TO PREACH IT . . . BUT PROUD AND ARROGANT . . . YOU DO NOT HAVE THE WISDOM OF GOD!

- C. To teach man how to live (I Cor. 3:6) according to the scripture

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1. NOT TO GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN

2. Dean Seth Wilson has a little printed essay entitled, "What the Bible Does Not Say About a Christian's Life and Conduct."

HE ASKS, "IS THERE ANY PART OF LIFE ON WHICH THE BIBLE HAS NO TEACHING?"

HE ANSWERS, "NO!"

There are precepts and principles in the Bible to cover every aspect of human life. ". . . all things that pertain to life and godliness . . ."

CONCLUSION

I. THE VILLAGE THAT LIVES BY THE BIBLE

November, 1960, *Reader's Digest*:

Soldiers in 1945 found this village which had been formed from two men converted by a missionary who left them a Bible and a hymn book. "Picking their way through the Bible, the two converts had found not only a Person on whom to pattern a life, but sound precepts on which to base their society. . . . Nurtured on this Book a whole generation had drawn from it their ideas . . . the result was plain to see. Shimabuku for years had had no jail, no brothel, no drunkenness, no divorce; there was a high level of health and happiness. . . ."

The soldiers attended a worship service and observed the lives of the people for a few days.

A sergeant whispered to his lieutenant, "So this is what comes out of only a Bible and couple of old guys who wanted to live like Jesus! . . . then, with a glance at a shell hole, he murmured, "Maybe we're using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!"

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD IS POWERFUL: THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL BECAUSE IT IS THE REVELATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. If you think words and ideas are not powerful, think of

- what Adolph Hitler did with lies, words. Marx and Lenin have captured more than two-thirds of the total population of the world with false ideas expressed through words.
- B. The gospel is infinitely more powerful than all those put together.

A. Campbell said, "The work of redemption is a system of work, or deeds, on the part of Heaven, which constitute the most splendid series of moral facts which man or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or moral prototype, they delineate or stamp the image of God upon the human soul."

Mr. Campbell goes on to point out that it is through the preaching of the gospel and through man's obedience to the scriptures (the revelation of the works and deeds of God) that the image of God is stamped upon the soul of man and through no other means.

"The love of God in the death of Christ never drew a tear of gratitude or joy from any eye, or excited a grateful emotion in any heart among the nations of our race to whom the testimony never came." (*The Christian System*, pg. 90-102. "Fact, Testimony, Faith, Feeling.")

III. BUT THE INFINITE POWER OF THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL WILL PRODUCE NOTHING IF IT IS NOT PROCLAIMED. . . . Leaven will not make bread if it is not put into contact with the lump.

THAT IS WHAT OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED TO DO. . . . FILL MEN AND WOMEN WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF CHRIST IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE AND SEND THEM FORTH TO DECLARE THE WISDOM OF GOD TO A FOOLISH AND DYING WORLD!

THAT IS WHAT FACULTY AND STAFF HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO. . . . THAT IS WHAT PEOPLE SUPPORT THE COLLEGE FOR. . . . THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE RECRUITED YOU FOR. . . . IF YOU HAVE COME FOR ANY OTHER REASON THAN THAT, YOU

ARE SHORT OF THE MARK.

I SAY TO YOU IN THE WORDS OF EDWARD JOHN CARNELL:

"IF IT IS TRUE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS TO SAVE SINNERS, HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO SAY THAT WE LOVE SINNERS IF WE FAIL TO CONFRONT THEM WITH THIS TRUTH? AND WHERE CAN WE FIND A DIVINELY VALIDATED ACCOUNT OF THIS TRUTH APART FROM SCRIPTURE? IN SUM, WE CAN EXPRESS NO HIGHER LOVE TO LOST HUMANITY THAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PRECISE FORM IN WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO REVEAL IT!"

C. WORLDWIDE IS THE INVITATION TO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP, CHAPTER 56

1. DISTINCTIONS DESTROYED

TEXT: 56:1-5

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.
- 2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that holdeth it fast; that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.
- 3 Neither let the foreigner, that hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak, saying, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah of the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant:
- 5 Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.