

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

The Call of Wisdom

by: Kris Brewer

As our task for the current calendar year has been to read through a large portion of the Wisdom Literature of scripture (see page 8 for reading schedule), perhaps it is wise to address the very concept of what *wisdom* is. This week I was reading a discussion online, and one of the participants appealed to James 1:5 with the intent of supporting the idea that God continues to share new revelation with His people today:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

Using this passage exposed that this participant did not truly understand what *wisdom* is! Unfortunately, many people have the same problem when it comes to understanding scripture. They confuse the ideas of *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

Biblical *wisdom* is:

1. LN 32.32 wisdom, prudence, discretion, i.e., the capacity to understand, and hence act. wisely (Col

1:28; 4:5); 2. LN 32.37 insight, a more or less formal kind of educational teaching in the ancient world, so, the content of what is regarded as wise (Ac 7:22; 1Co 2:6)¹

The emphasis here is not the gaining of knowledge, but the using of knowledge. When James instructed believers to ask God for wisdom, he was not at all suggesting that God was going to be providing new information to any and all who might ask for it. In fact, the New Testament is quite clear on the subject: God revealed all that He intended man to have in the first century, through His inspired writers. Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would lead them into “all truth” (John 16:12-15). Paul said that this was exactly what happened, as the Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God to him and the other inspired men, and they wrote it down for everyone to read (Ephesians 3). Paul could confidently tell the Galatian

¹ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

brethren that they were not to listen to any kind of new message, even if they (the apostles) or an angel from heaven should try to proclaim it to them (Galatians 1:6-9). This was because all that God intended for Christians to have was already revealed in the first century. The writings that were given, even though they came following the writing of the book of Galatians, merely repeated what had already been delivered by God through inspired teachers.

Wisdom, however, is something that all believers should be seeking. How do we put into practice the instructions that have been given by God? To achieve that end, it is important to have a biblical view of what wisdom is and the part it plays in the plan of God for mankind!

Proverbs 8 provides some insight from God concerning the nature of wisdom. It expresses how important wisdom is, and reflects how those who believe in God should view and respond to wisdom.

The wise man, in this section of proverbs, personified wisdom. By doing so, we come to know wisdom as a wonderful, godly woman. There are several characteristics that we can draw from the descriptions portrayed by the author.

Wisdom is vocal...

Solomon portrays wisdom as a woman who is crying out to all who will listen to her. This is a description that he uses more than once in the collection of proverbs (Proverbs 1:20, 21; 9:3). Wisdom is not something that only the elite have opportunity to hear and apply. She calls out, and gives opportunity to all to hear. Solomon depicts her actions as desperately seeking someone to listen to her, pleading with them to respond:

She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, At the entrance of the doors: "To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men. O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart. (Proverbs 8:3-5)

Wisdom is available to all who will listen to her. This is why James could instruct us to ask God for it, and He will provide it liberally. Those who are already willing to appeal to God for such wisdom have their ears open to her cry, and are seeking to employ her righteousness!

Wisdom is righteousness...

Solomon clearly identifies the words of wisdom as being righteous. It is prudent to think of the idea of righteousness as being right-ness. There is a standard of what is

right and what is wrong. God's word defines that for us. Wisdom demands that our actions follow that which is right! One cannot continue to follow that which is sinful, that which is against the revealed will of God, and still either consider himself wise or hold himself up as an example of wisdom!

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. (Proverbs 8:6-7)

Wisdom is valuable...

Some may ask the question, "What good is wisdom?" Sometimes it may seem that those who proceed in their actions with wisdom don't have much to show for it. But, the problem is that when we make such judgments, we are looking at a small snapshot of a situation, and not the big picture. Solomon said that there is an innate value to wisdom, and that value is far above those things that many believe to be of the greatest value:

Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. (Proverbs 8:10-11)

Sometimes, if wisdom does not produce something tangible (like money can) its value is overlooked or ignored. Of course, such a reaction, in and of itself, represents a lack of wisdom. One who is so shortsighted as to not be able to see the bountiful blessings that come by acting with wisdom are not exhibiting wisdom anyway! Wisdom has the ability to accomplish so much more for us, both in this life and looking toward eternity, than foolishness could ever hope to do.

Wisdom is powerful...

Those who employ wisdom have the ability to harness power. Of course, power can be snatched by those who are foolish, but their power cannot last long. Power established on wisdom is true and long lasting. Solomon said:

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth. (Proverbs 8:14-16)

This type of power is evident when we examine the rulers of the world at large. Those who show wisdom have a power that is far more stable than those who rule in foolishness. We should appeal to our rulers, wherever we may live, to seek wisdom, and not just human wisdom, but that wisdom that comes from appealing to God's instruction (James 3:15-18).

As Christians today, we are not looking for some kind of earthly power. We can see, and even appreciate, how earthly rulers can rule well by appealing to wisdom, but that is not our focus. The kind of rule that we want to employ has much more to do with our spiritual wellbeing. Fathers are to rule their families well (1 Timothy 3:4). Elders are to rule the church well (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Neither of these positions are domineering positions of rule, but rather valuable leadership positions in the family and in the church. Wisdom will differentiate between the two attitudes! With wisdom, we may not be the kind of people who rule nations, but we can be the kind of people that develop homes and churches that reflect what God wants them to be.

Wisdom is eternal...

Solomon describes the wisdom of which he speaks as being in existence from before the time of the creation:

“The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, (Proverbs 8:22–30)

Wisdom has its source from God. It is an innate characteristic of God. It is one of His characteristics that we are to learn to emulate! This wisdom stands in direct contrast to worldly wisdom. James makes this point clearly:

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln.
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Join our MeetUp page for weekly study opportunities around Bozeman!

<https://www.meetup.com/Bozeman-Bible-Study-Meetup/>

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13–18)

Our responsibility is to draw our actions from the wisdom that is “from above,” which will be evident by the characteristics that are listed by James. When we are acting within the confines of this type of wisdom, we are becoming more and more like God, which should be our goal in this life!

Three Shakes

by: Chadwick Brewer

“Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.” - Hebrews 12:28

The Bible speaks about God shaking the earth at three separate and important occasions. The first time God shook the earth was at Mt. Sinai. When the people came out of Egypt and come to the mountain for the covenant of Moses, God’s voice shook the earth (Hebrews 12:26). The second time God shook the earth was when Jesus died on the cross. Matthew records four phenomena (Matt. 27:51-52) that occurred at His death and the second of those events was the earth shaking when the New Covenant came into effect. The last “shaking” is a promise God has made to us. He has promised that He will once more shake the earth and also the heavens which indicates the removal of those things (Hebrews 12:27).

There are a couple of things we can learn from this. First, we see that God does this at times of great change. He did this while instituting the Law of Moses, the consecration of the Law of Christ, and He will do this again at the end of this world. The second thing we can learn is that the things here are temporary. They will be removed while Christ’s Kingdom will remain. Our pursuit of the things of this world are futile. We need to pursue the things that are eternal by offering to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

More Needful For You

Ladies

Corner

by: Laura Brewer

As human beings it is easy to fall into a “me first” mentality – i.e. we look out for ourselves first. There are so many things to do and take care of in terms of our physical needs in this world that there seldom remains time to think about anything else. Our own comfort and interests typically take precedence over anything that could be done for others. When someone asks a favor of us, our initial reaction might be to grumble or complain and focus on how inconvenient it might be. While it may be a “natural” tendency to think of only ourselves, it is clear from the scriptures that we as Christians are to put the needs of our brethren first.

In Philippians 1, Paul addresses the brethren at Philippi and makes it clear that his physical condition is such that death would be an escape from the pain and persecution of the flesh. However, he writes that if it is God’s will, he will continue on so that he can be of more use to the church at Philippi:

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” (Philippians 1:21-24)

Even if it means a continuance of his own physical pain, Paul makes it clear that his main priority is the well-being of his brethren. We have the tendency to take the “easy” way, or whatever direction involves the least amount of discomfort for ourselves. Paul, however, loved his brethren so much that he was willing to endure his own pain just so that he could be useful to others. He continues on in chapter 2 and instructs the Philippians to take on this selfless attitude, and to strive for unity and fellowship by humbly esteeming others better than themselves: “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).

The best possible example we could ever be given of selflessness is that of Christ Jesus, as Paul goes on to describe in verses 5-11, and how Christ came to this earth to glorify not Himself but God. Jesus, even though He “did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6), put on the form of a man in order to fulfill God’s plan of salvation, although he had every right to feel like such actions were “beneath” Him. Additionally, the life He came to on this earth was one of hardship, servitude, and ultimately a painful death. Christ did not choose the “easy” way out for His own well-being, but He selflessly gave Himself up for us.

Not only are we instructed to look out for the interests or needs of others, but we are told to do it without complaint: “Do all things without complaining and disputing” (Phil 2:14). If Christ Jesus, who of all people would have the most “right” to complain about persecutions or discomforts of this life, did all that was required of Him without grumbling or complaining, then we need to strive to do the same. Any pain, discomfort, or inconvenience that we experience in life pales in comparison to what Christ endured. Our natural tendency when asked to do something we do not “want” to do is to grumble and complain – we may even go out of our way to make excuses about why we cannot help, such as “I’m too busy” and the like. But if we are truly putting the needs of our brethren before our own, we should be ready and willing to help them in any way that we can.

What sort of things, then, are we to be doing for our brethren when we prioritize their needs? In the book of Romans we are given instructions about what this aspect of brotherly love looks like in action:

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:10-15)

We are to be diligent – working hard even if it means some physical discomfort for ourselves. We are to be patient – helping with something even if we have done the same thing repeatedly in the past. We are to be hospitable – providing above and beyond without expecting anything in return. Seeking out the needs of others is not something that we can do by accident. We must be actively seeking opportunities to help our brethren, and ready to jump at the chance if they express a need. Whether it is taking food to a family in a time of need, or driving someone to a doctor’s appointment, prioritizing the needs of our brethren is going to require our time and energy. Doing things for others, (while simultaneously providing for the needs of our own families), can even be physically exhausting at times. However, it is spiritually rewarding when brothers and sisters in Christ are constantly seeking out ways to help each other.

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:9-10)

Daily Bible Reading

September 2016

September 1 Psalms 142-145
September 2 Psalms 146-150
September 5 Proverbs 1-2
September 6 Proverbs 3-4
September 7 Proverbs 5:1-7:5
September 8 Proverbs 7:6-8:36
September 9 Proverbs 9-10
September 12 Proverbs 11-12
September 13 Proverbs 13-14
September 14 Proverbs 15-16
September 15 Proverbs 17-18

September 16 Proverbs 19-20
September 19 Proverbs 21:1-22:16
September 20 Proverbs 22:17-23:35
September 21 Proverbs 24-25
September 22 Proverbs 26-27
September 23 Proverbs 28-29
September 26 Proverbs 30-31
September 27 Ecclesiastes 1-2
September 28 Ecclesiastes 3-6
September 29 Ecclesiastes 7:1-9:12
September 30 Ecclesiastes 9:13-12:14

Gallatin Valley Church of Christ
C/O Kris Brewer
PO Box 11111
Bozeman, MT 59719

Mail To:

www.gallatinvalleycoc.com