

The Puzzles of Job

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Chapter Nine

WHERE IS WISDOM TO BE FOUND?

We consider another of Job's puzzles. This is the sixth, though it is not the sixth question Job asks in the book bearing his name. We have selected this one because it represents a problem faced not only by Job but by men in all ages.

At first glance this question may seem simple. Job asked, "**Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?**" (Job 28:12). Like so many other things, however, that seem easy at first, we may find it difficult to find the correct answer.

The search for wisdom has been the "holy grail" that some men have sought for all their lives. Many have failed to find it because they looked in the wrong place.

How our generation tries to be wise! Wisdom is defined as the power to judge rightly and follow the soundest course of action based on knowledge, experience and understanding. It is easy to see why wisdom is so precious and why Job would ask where it was to be found. There is so little of it at any time.

Wisdom is supposed to be possessed by the aged, for they have had time to assimilate and analyze what the experiences of life have taught. In line with this we name the teeth we get last our "wisdom teeth." Our third molars usually appear when we are between the ages of 17 and 25. So, when youth speaks up, the older ones respond: "What does he know? He has not even cut his wisdom teeth!"

One need not look hard to observe that a man can be foolish, even though he is old. There is a saying among us to the effect that "there's no fool like an old fool." No, wisdom does not come to merely because we grow older. At the same time, it is not found with the young simply because they are young.

In thinking on this subject Job mentions several places where wisdom will not be found. He says, "**Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living**" (Job 28:13). The patriarch is saying in effect that man does not possess wisdom by himself. Job

continued, **"The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea said, it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold"** (Job 28:14-19). In other words, no amount of wealth can buy wisdom. To be rich does not mean to be wise.

Wisdom's Source

"Whence then cometh wisdom?" asked Job. **"And where is the place of understanding?"** (verse 20). This was not a problem without a solution. Job not only asked the question but he reached a conclusion. His reason, his experience and above all, his faith, led him straight to the point: **"God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof . . . He prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding"** (verses 23, 27, 28). True wisdom starts in the cradle and not in the college classroom. It starts first in the heart of man through wise teaching from the Scriptures at home. It starts with worship of GOD, not with the wise sayings of men.

If we know the answer, why is wisdom so hard to find? The reason is spiritual and moral. Wisdom cannot be found by the selfish heart. Our judgment is largely of a selfish nature, based on what we want, what we think, and how we feel. In fact, we often think with our emotions. This is why we sometimes pass off what we consider bad judgment on the part of another by saying, "Don't pay attention to him, he is not feeling well today." We recognize the truth that we seldom speak wisdom, for all too often we express our feelings which cannot be trusted in most cases. When we are led by our feelings we are in constant hot water.

When we look for a man to be a judge among us, we try to choose one who can judge rightly, that is as much as a human being can. We look for a man with experience and sound judgment, a man who is willing to lay aside his personal feelings and stick to the facts in a given case. Sound judgement is such a difficult matter to most of us that we have another humorous statement with a great deal of truth in it: "I have made up my mind, so you need not try to confuse me with facts."

The Bible says, **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"** (Isaiah 53:6). That is why it is hard to be wise. We find it easier to go our way than GOD's way. This was Adam's sin and it is ours. We refuse to surrender to GOD. We would rather go our own way and die than go His way and live.

Another reason why wisdom is hard to find is that it is costly. We have already seen that Job estimated its value to be far above material things and the writer of the Proverbs does likewise: **"Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it"** (Proverbs 8:11).

Let us not for a moment confuse wisdom with cleverness or wittiness. Many of our attempts to show cleverness are but cover-ups for our stupidity. People who make a habit of this are

sometimes known among us as "smart alecks," a biting colloquial phrase describing one who is offensively conceited and self-assertive. The door to real wisdom is locked to such a person until a great change takes place in his heart. But this is the day of the clever retort, the witty saying, the speedy quip, but none of these is wisdom. Job's definition stands out in beautiful simplicity. It is a startling, sublime, saving truth: **"God understands the way [of wisdom], and he knoweth the place thereof. . . . and unto man he saith, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."**

The fear of the LORD is not the end of wisdom but the beginning of it. The person who is really wise will fear the LORD. Could the vessel that says to the potter, "I have no need of thee" be wise? Is the creature wise who says to the CREATOR, "I have no need of thee?" Will the living man dare to ignore the living GOD and say that is wisdom?

True wisdom starts with GOD and develops under His direction. Man is never the source of wisdom nor can he develop it, for it can either begin with nor survive upon a foundation of clay. It must have under it the everlasting arms. Its source is in the eternal, all-wise GOD.

When JESUS came into this world He said, **"I come to do thy will, O God."** That is wisdom. He became a man that He might suffer and feel as we do, for a GOD of wisdom is sensible to the needs of His creatures. That is why He said to us that if we would save our lives we would lose them, but if we would lose them for His sake we would save them. GOD is a GOD of wisdom and has a plan and purpose for every life.

Where then will wisdom be found? In the heart of the man who fears the LORD. This is where it begins and it continues by our finding out what GOD has planned for us and following after it. Wisdom is finding out how GOD thinks about things and then acting accordingly. Wisdom is finding out what GOD has willed for us and seeking to do that will. That is why the Scriptures say of wisdom: **"For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death"** (Proverbs 8:35, 36).

Since GOD has sent His Son into the world saying, **"Unto you is born... a Saviour,"** is it wisdom to reject Him? When the Scriptures tell us to **"seek those things which are above"** or **"walk in the Spirit,"** is it wisdom to do otherwise? Since JESUS said, **"Follow me,"** and the Word states: **"As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Is it not wisdom to believe His Word and act upon it? Indeed it is.

When GOD invites us to come and rest, we who live in this mixed-up generation, is it not wisdom to come to Him for that rest? We are living in a society bored with life and expressing that boredom and frustration in acts of lawlessness and violence. We will never find rest in such ways. Heart rest is found only in CHRIST.

"Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:
Only true pleasures in JESUS abound"

Two Kinds of Wisdom

There are two kinds of wisdom. One is that natural wisdom with which every man is endowed. It has its roots in itself and rests in itself. It acclaims itself king and will bow to none else. For this reason it is not accepted of GOD. It is also because of this natural wisdom that the Bible says, **"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE"** (I Corinthians 1:26-29).

The other kind of wisdom is true wisdom, a wisdom that is submissive to GOD. It is the wisdom that wants to do what He wants, and seeks His will. That wisdom is of great value. Concerning it, the Bible says, **"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?"** (Proverbs 8:1). Wisdom speaking of itself says, **"By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures"** (Proverbs 8:15-21).

No wonder true wisdom is precious and to be sought after. Out of it comes right judgment, true justice, benevolent rule, and a full heart. These are the very things that we seek but seldom find, because we seek for them in the wrong place.

This same Book of Proverbs goes on to say, **"There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health"** (Proverbs 12:18). In other words, just as a sharp sword can cut and injure the body so a sharp tongue cuts a person to the very quick. On the other hand the tongue of the wise brings healing and help. This is why Paul said in Ephesians 4:29, **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."**

True wisdom is a gift of GOD to the seeker who searches for it with a humble heart. When the LORD answered Job He said, **"Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?"** (Job 38:36). Job knew the answer just as we know the answer - true wisdom is the work of GOD.

It was in answer to his humble petition that Solomon received wisdom from GOD. He had asked for **"wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this thy people, that is so great"** (II Chronicles 1:10). The LORD answered, **"Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee"** (II Chronicles 1:12).

The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon and to hear his wisdom, **"And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. And when**

the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also . . . she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard" (II Corinthians 9:2-6).

David knew the source of true wisdom and that GOD's purpose for it was that it should pervade every aspect of a human heart. When David's great sins connected with Uriah and Bathsheba were brought home to him, he knew that he had been very unwise so he prayed: "**Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom"** (Psalm 51:6).

True wisdom causes the simple to make wise decisions. This is the testimony of the Psalmist who said, "**The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple"** (Psalm 19:7).

True wisdom causes us to think as we ought to think about GOD. The inspired apostle wrote, "**Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God** (this is in respect to spiritual matters such as sin, salvation, GOD and His ways) **For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours"** (I Corinthians 3:18-21).

True wisdom causes us to think as we should think about ourselves. This again is a testimony from the Apostle Paul: "**For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"** (Romans 12:3). What a change this would make in our world! No wonder the Bible says, "**when pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom"** (Proverbs 11:2).

True wisdom causes us to think correctly about our manner of life. The Bible says in this connection: "**Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation** (manner of life) **his works with meekness of wisdom** (that is how a person can prove his wisdom) **But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom** (the wisdom that is bitter, full of envy and strife) **descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"** (James 3:13-18).

True wisdom will cause us to think rightly about GOD's purpose for us. "**Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the**

dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:8-11).

True wisdom will make us think correctly about our time here as well as hereafter. In the 90th Psalm we read: **"we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"** (Psalm 90:9-12). Most of us slide along through life, thinking that since we lived yesterday, we will surely live today and tomorrow also. We are deceived into thinking that we have plenty of time to prepare our hearts for meeting GOD. But true wisdom will have none of this dilatory attitude toward spiritual things. It would have us get right with GOD now; true wisdom will always keep us ready to meet our LORD.

True wisdom causes us to think the way we ought to think about GOD's Son. Here is just a sample of what is involved in that: **"Christ Jesus . . . is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."**

True wisdom always glorifies GOD. This is what the testimony of Paul as he reached the end of that great section of the unveiling of GOD's unmatched wisdom and mercy in dealing with the Jew. **"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 counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"** (Romans 11:33-36).

What shall we concluded then about wisdom? Learn from Solomon that **"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction"** (Proverbs 1:7).

Job tells us, **"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding"** (Job 28:28).

Right at the beginning of the Psalms we have this admonition: **"Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him"** (Psalm 2:10-12).

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