

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – The Crisis Continues – 7-13 November 2015

Christ would have us depend fully on Him and not boast of our own wisdom. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24). These words set forth the whole purpose and end of man’s existence. Wisdom, might, or riches, with God left out, count for nothing. But he who knows God cannot be without wisdom and might and riches. The highest study of mankind is not man, but God.

We focus on the above text, contrasting heavenly and earthly wisdom, for it is central to the continuing crisis even among us. There is a wisdom of the world which is possessed by those whom the world recognises as its wise men; but no one should glory in the possession of this. True wisdom is from above, and not from beneath. The wisdom of the earth will perish, and will save no one from perishing with it. It will perish because it knows not God. Whatever is of the world is not of the Father, and every plant that God has not planted must be rooted up. Not that knowledge will perish, for in the future state knowledge will abound much more than it does now; but the wisdom of this world will perish. Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge. Satan, as an angel in heaven, had a vast amount of knowledge, but his course was the most unwise that he could have taken. And so of the knowledge of the wise men of the earth. They know much, but they know not God. They see many things, but they do not see God. They do not discern God in that which they see. God “hath made His wonderful works to be remembered” (Psalm 111:4), and true wisdom sees God in all things that He has made. And thus to the one who has true wisdom, all things speak of God.

But worldly wisdom speaks not of God. It speaks of science, it speaks of evolution, of forces that are ‘inherent’ in nature and matter, and of the wonderful intellect of man; but it speaks not of the Creator who made all things. It glorifies Him not as God. And so it was that “the world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). That which should have served to draw their attention to God, was perverted to an opposite purpose. Their knowledge lacked the one essential thing that makes the difference between wisdom and foolishness.

We read in the epistle of James: “Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). And we are told what are the characteristics of true wisdom: “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” (verse 17). This is the wisdom that descendeth from above. It is nothing else than the manifestation of the knowledge of God. And if these things are not a part of your life, then whatever knowledge you may have, you have not true wisdom. If knowledge points not to God, it can only tend to destruction.

“Neither let the mighty man glory in his might;” for his might is nothing. Might without God is of no more value than wisdom without God. There is no might but of God; “no power but of God” (Romans 13:1). Whether it be the power of angels or man or of devils, it is still His. “The powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1). Men who have power are but the stewards of the power of God. When Pilate said to Christ, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” Jesus answered, “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above” (John 19:10-11). Men may pervert their stewardship, as Pilate did, but in the end they must give account thereof to God. The Master requires that all things should be done according to His will. And those who do according to their own will, making their possession of power an occasion for the glorifying of self, will sooner discover with sorrow the exceeding folly of their course.

No one has a knowledge of God who does not know that all power belongs unto Him. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psalm 62:11). This truth is to the Christian a source of joy, since he can look to God as his Father. Whatever manifestation of power he beholds, he recognises has the power of God, and knows it the same time that the power of God is for his good, since it is to him the means and “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). It is a truth which comforts him and gives

trust in the place of fear. Since all power is of God, it necessarily follows that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28) and believe on Him unto salvation.

What has been said of wisdom and power, may also be said of riches. All wealth belongs unto God, and no man to whom God entrusts a part of it has occasion thereby to glory. To him who would do this the question comes, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). God only is rich; and His riches do not consist of silver or gold, or of anything that has in itself no value. The riches of God are riches of mercy and grace; and in the ages to come we shall know "the exceeding riches of His grace, and His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7). He "is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Romans 10:12). He is rich, therefore, in that which they need who call upon Him, and this is mercy and grace. They are things of intrinsic worth. And God says of them, "in these things I delight" (Jeremiah 9:24).

No flesh has anything whereof to boast. No man has anything whereof to glory, save in the knowledge of God. "God forbid that I should glory," says the apostle, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). In Christ are manifest the riches of the mercy and grace of God. To know Christ is to have the knowledge of God. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Writes the apostle, "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 hath 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. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God 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" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:25-27).

What! thankful that the Gospel has been hid from some? Yes, since the hiding of it from them, is the revelation of it to babes! That is indeed a most wonderful way of hiding the Gospel, namely, to make it so plain and simple that even babes can understand it. Surely no "wise and prudent" man will ever have the face to accuse God of impartiality on that ground. Fancy a wise man who has 'not been able to see the evidence for the truth of the Gospel,' coming to the Lord, and saying, 'You hath hidden these things from me, and have revealed them only to little children; and it is not fair!' 'Ah, but how does it happen that they are revealed to babes? how is it possible for them to understand these deep things?' The only reply can be, 'Because you have made them so simple.' And then the report would come, 'And do you, who boast of your wisdom, mean to say that you could not comprehend a thing that was so easy that a child could grasp it?' Such wise man would be confounded.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:20, 27). Little children recognised the Messiahship of Christ, when doctors of theology saw nothing but an uproar (Matthew 21:15-16). "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Thank the Lord, that He has made the way so very easy and simple that a child can know it. No one need err unless he is wise in his own conceits, and despises the truth because it is so plain. Yes, we should join with Christ in thanks to the Almighty Father.

It is in having Christ in us that we know God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). Christ is the revelation of God to man (John 14:7-9). Christ is "God with us" (Matthew 1:23), for the fullness of God dwells in Him (Colossians 1:19; 2:9), when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we know God because we are "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).