

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD – IN CHRIST JESUS.

– CHRIST OUR WISDOM –

"Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness [justification], and sanctification, and redemption [deliverance]: he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." – 1 Cor. 1:30.

WISDOM is the principal thing:" "With all thy getting get understanding," thus wrote the wise man, Solomon, and so we all agree: wisdom is necessary at the very beginning of any matter that would result favorably. Wisdom is craved by the whole world of mankind, and the majority, even while going in divers directions, would claim to be seeking to walk in wisdom's ways. How important, then, that we discriminate as between the true wisdom and that which is so frequently misnamed wisdom, which is really folly!

Mother Eve in her perfection had a craving for wisdom, but inadvertently took the wrong advice and the wrong course in seeking its way. It would appear that the very basis of her temptation, through which she fell from divine favor and into sin, was the exercise of this laudable ambition to be wise. She perceived that the serpent was the most cunning, most wise, amongst the beasts, and she perceived that the serpent ate the fruit of a particular tree which Adam and herself had been forbidden to eat of. She gave credit to the tree and its forbidden fruit for the wisdom of the serpent, and concluded that its fruit was "to be *desired* to make one wise." The desire for the wisdom led to the disobedience – to the fall from divine favor, under the penalty of sin – death, and its associated troubles and miseries.

Many of Eve's children are seeking wisdom in a similarly wrong direction. Her proper and wise course would have been to have acknowledged that she knew comparatively little, was seriously lacking of wisdom, and that God, the very embodiment of wisdom, was also the embodiment of love and her truest friend, and that his

command was the command of wisdom. Had she followed the divine command, trusted the divine wisdom, she would have been saved from her great mistake and its terrible consequences. She needed to learn that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and obedience to him the completeness of wisdom. Had she been obedient to the Lord, no doubt in due time and in a much better way he would have granted her all the wisdom she desired and was capable of using. The same principles hold true with Eve's children: all who would walk in wisdom's paths should learn that all true wisdom "comes from above" and that any other is "earthly, sensual, devilish."

One of the first lessons of life to be learned is, that our own judgments are unsafe, and even those who are least unbalanced by the fall and who, therefore, more closely resemble mother Eve who was perfect, are as liable as she was to make the mistake of seeking wisdom in a wrong direction – leaning to their own understanding. (Prov. 3:5.) Those, therefore, who would take the wisest course should promptly admit their own unwisdom and seek for divine direction, divine wisdom. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." – Jas. 1:5.

But alas, how few are disposed to accept the wisdom that cometh from above! The majority have so large a degree of selfishness that they seem indeed to make miserable failures out of the best opportunities of their lives, before they realize that they lack wisdom and need guidance by the great Teacher. Hence, as the Lord declares, only the humble, only the "poor in spirit," are in the way that leads to eternal life and the Kingdom – because only these will seek for and **[R2262 : page 52]** obey the heavenly wisdom from the great Counselor. This class alone is in the condition to be taught of God: and concerning all who shall attain to the fulness of divine favor it is written, "*They* shall all be taught of God."

It is for this reason that, as we look about us in the world, we find just the condition of things which the Apostle described in the verses

preceding our text, namely, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the [worldly] 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." Do we not see that as a rule the men and women of largest natural ability, and greatest natural wisdom, fail to obtain the riches of divine grace in knowledge and in experience, which some of the less favored naturally do attain? Surely, the reason of this generally is that the greater our mental poverty, the greater our humility, and consequently the greater our trust in the Lord's wisdom, and reliance upon his instruction, and obedience thereto.

Not always is this true, of course; for we find that some of the most haughty and self-conceited of our race are really the most poverty stricken as respects real ability: and occasionally we find some possessed of rare abilities, who are extremely humble minded and very reliant upon God; but neither of these cases is the rule: they are exceptions to the rule. Gather together a company of God's devoted, consecrated people in any place and scan them critically, and you will be convinced that not many wise, or great, or mighty are being chosen; but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith to be heirs of the Kingdom. The worldly-wise to-day are not to be found among the open scoffers and infidels, for worldly wisdom dictates to them a different course; they are to be found rather in the most respectable and aristocratic congregations of professed Christians. Many of them are too honorable to be open hypocrites, and therefore rarely take part in meetings or say anything respecting their inmost convictions, – their inmost thoughts or doubts respecting the creed of their own church and the creeds of all other [R2263 : page 52] churches; nevertheless they feel that it is *wise* to support Christianity, because of its moral influence on their families, their employes and their neighbors; besides even the doctrines which they at heart repudiate have, they believe, a restraining influence upon the "lower classes:" hence their wisdom, worldly-wisdom, guides them

into the support of Christianity, but forbids them to go to any extreme, such as annunciation of faith in Christ or full consecration to his service.

For the humble, however, God has provided true wisdom in Christ. His words no less than his example show us that we are sinners and that "no man cometh unto the Father" except by him. He tells us of the Father's pity, and of the redemption provided through his own blood, and of our privilege to accept of divine grace unto full forgiveness and reconciliation, and of our need of the heavenly wisdom for every step of the journey, if we would walk the narrow way, which leads to the glory of the Kingdom and life everlasting. And all who accept this "call" accept the great Mediator's instruction and guidance, as the very essence of divine wisdom. With varying degrees of promptness and after varying degrees of wandering from this good Shepherd, and being sought and found by him, the faithful eventually reach the position where they put no confidence in themselves and their own wisdom, but all confidence in the wisdom of him whom God hath appointed to be our wisdom – "who of God is made unto us wisdom." When this degree of progress has been attained, a measure of rest and contentment takes possession of the true sheep, which permits them to look up to God with confidence in every matter and at every time – especially in seasons of distress and grief and trial. They learn not to trust to their own wisdom any longer; but to trust implicitly to the wisdom and goodness of the great Shepherd.

But not for a considerable time is such a development of confidence in the Lord's wisdom attained: meantime, they have many battles and contentions against the wiles of Satan, who would tempt them to use their own wisdom or the wisdom of other men and to doubt the results of following the divine wisdom and its program. On every hand, the flesh, assisted by the devil, offers inducements and seductions to follow its way and to cease to follow in the Lord's way. In business affairs, in church affairs, in home and family affairs, the

temptation is continually advanced, that we should choose our own way, follow our own preferences and thereby reap larger and better results. It is only after considerable experience, and frequently after many failures, that the "pilgrim" for the heavenly country learns to trust no wisdom but that which cometh down from above and is in accordance with the divine Word. Describing the attitude of the true children of God, abiding in Christ as branches in the vine, the Apostle says: –

"He hath abounded toward us in all *wisdom* and prudence; having made known unto us the mysteries of his will." – Eph. 1:8.

"We also pray for you and desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **[R2263 : page 53]** good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." – Col. 1:9,10.

Let your hearts be "knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." – Col. 2:2,3.

Notwithstanding the fact that those who accept Christ are the "meek," "the poor in spirit," and lower than the average standard along the lines of worldly wisdom and power and wealth, yet nevertheless, the acceptance by these of *Christ as their wisdom* makes them really wiser than others; – not only in respect to the greater riches which they are laying up in heaven, but also wiser in respect to the most ordinary affairs of this present life. This is not because they miraculously receive new brains or a better and more orderly arrangement of the brains they have, but because submitting their judgments on every subject to the will of the Lord, and walking according to his directions in every matter and in every particular, they have *his wisdom, his spirit*, to guide them. Hence, altho their own minds are imperfect and unbalanced, as much or more than the

average of the race, the Apostle is able to say of such, "God hath given us the spirit of a sound mind." – 2 Tim. 1:7.

The spirit of a sound mind enables its possessors to view things more correctly than they would be able to view them of themselves; for instance, it cautions us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but according to the measure of the Lord's spirit possessed. Yet while cautioning us to be very humble, it guards us against being fearful, men-pleasers, sycophants. While constraining us to be peace-lovers and peace-makers, and kind, and forgiving, and generous, without maliciousness or vindictiveness, it nevertheless cautions us to be firm respecting principles of righteousness and truth. We may and should gladly yield our own preferences to those of others, for the sake of serving others or doing them good, yet we must never do so at the expense of the truth and principle. In the family, love is to be the rule, blended with mercy and justice, kindness and generosity; nevertheless, the rod is not to be spared if its use be necessary to the proper training of the child. And the Christian father is not only to be "kind and gentle toward all," but is to "rule his own family well, having his own children in proper subjection." Thus, we might multiply the various counsels of the heavenly wisdom, as it enters into the lives of those who are fully devoted to the Lord and gives them wisdom and grace for the affairs of life far beyond any that they would have had without it.

After exhorting us that "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," the Apostle James (1:5) says, "Who among you is a wise man and endued with knowledge? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have strife in your hearts, glory not [to think yourselves led of the Lord and guided by his true wisdom], and lie not against the truth. This wisdom [which in selfishness seeks its own gratification and advancement, envying others and striving selfishly for its own advancement] 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 entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make for peace." – James 3:13-18.

Let us remember well this analysis of the wisdom that comes from above.

First, It is *pure*, guileless, sincere, honorable, open, above board: it cometh to the light, loveth the light, it is not of the darkness, nor of sin, it is utterly opposed to secret whisperings, back bitings and all slanderous and underhanded works and ways. It takes the Lord at his word, receiving the pure word of wisdom into a good and honest heart. It is honest: it does not deceive itself into believing that self-will is the Lord's will.

Secondly, It is peaceable: that is to say, so far as is possible and consistent with honesty and purity it is peaceable. It loves and desires peace, harmony, unity; but since peace is not first, but purity first, therefore it can only be fully at peace and fully in harmony with that which is pure and honest and good.

Thirdly, It is gentle – it is not rude, course, rough, and has no sympathy with such a spirit and such methods. It is not only of God, but God like. Nevertheless, its gentleness follows its purity and peaceableness: those who receive this wisdom are not first or primarily gentle, and therefore peaceable and pure, but they are primarily pure, sanctified with the truth, and therefore are peaceable, and therefore are gentle, and therefore are easy to be entreated. But they can only be easily entreated in harmony with purity, peace and gentleness: they cannot be easily entreated to assist in any evil work of bearing false witness or scandal-mongers, or slandering, or evil-speaking, nor into any of the works of the flesh and the devil.

Fourthly, It is full of mercy and good fruits: it rejoices in mercy, because that is a part of its very self; mercy and all the good fruits of

the spirit of the Lord are sure to proceed from the heart in which rules the spirit of love, honesty, purity, peaceableness and gentleness. But this mercy, while taking hold upon [R2263 : page 54] the ignorant and the unintentional evil-doers with sympathy and help, cannot have the slightest sympathy or affiliation with wilful wrong-doers, because the spirit of wisdom is not first mercy, but first purity; hence, the mercy of the spirit of wisdom can only exercise itself upon the unintentional wrong-doers, or the ignorant wrong-doers.

Fifth, Without partiality (which would signify injustice): the purity and peace, gentleness, mercy and good fruits of the spirit of wisdom, lead us to be no respecters of persons, except as character shall demonstrate real value: the outward features, the natural man, the color of his skin, etc., are ignored by the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom that cometh from above. It is impartial and loves that which is [R2264 : page 54] pure, good, peaceable, gentle, true, wherever found and under whatever circumstances it exhibits itself.

Sixth, It is without hypocrisy. This heavenly wisdom is so pure, so peaceable, so gentle and so merciful, toward all that are worthy of consideration or notice, that there is no necessity for hypocrisy where it controls. And it is bound to be out of harmony, out of sympathy and out of fellowship with all that is sinful; and in fellowship and in sympathy with all that is pure or that is making for purity and peace and gentleness – so that it has no room for hypocrisy.

Let us, dearly beloved, as children of God, more and more fully accept Christ as our wisdom, for all of the affairs of life – little as well as great, temporal as well as spiritual. Let us seek to be more and more *filled* with the spirit of true wisdom that cometh from above, whose ultimate teaching is *holiness* to the Lord.

[R2270 : page 54]

SWEET THE HOUR AT JESUS' FEET.

Sweet is the hour to those who meet

In fellowship at Jesus' feet,
Communing of the wondrous love
That drew him from his home above
Down to this world of sin and woe,
That we the way of life might know,
Might here by faith in Him prepare
That precious robe the "bride" shall wear.

Sweet is this hour; but none can tell
What glories in those mansions dwell,
Reserved beyond life's rolling tide;
For those who in the Lord confide,
Who bear the toil, the cross sustain,
And know to die in Christ is gain,
Shall in his Kingdom glories share
And shine as jewels bright and fair.

Sweet is this hour; but oh how blest
The one that ushers in our rest! –
That ope's to our enraptured eyes
The glories of our heavenly prize,
Where clothed in bridal robes we'll stand
As kings and priests at Christ's right hand,
While heavenly hosts before him fall
And hail him King and Lord of all.

– *A. H. Bigelow.*
