

Scars of the New Jesus People - Wisdom

Delivered: February 4, 2024

Scriptures: [1 Cor 1:17-2:16](#), [Prov 1:20-21](#), [4:5-9](#), [8:17](#), [32-35](#)

Intro

Bob Gladstone said, "Wisdom is the practical knowledge of God's utterly unique value system translated into a powerful, blessed way of life."

James says that there is wisdom that is from above (God's wisdom), and there is wisdom that is earthly (demonic wisdom) ([James 3.15](#)),

"the wisdom that is from above is pure, full of peace, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and without hypocrisy." ([James 3.17](#)).

God's wisdom is not like the world's wisdom. So when we come to faith in Christ and we begin living as citizens of His heavenly kingdom, we feel the tension of how we've grown up with the world's wisdom and how that is opposed to heaven's wisdom. When we begin to walk with Jesus we see that what the world calls wise, successful, and powerful, God actually calls foolish, fruitless, and feeble. Conversely, what God calls wise and powerful, the world calls foolish and weak.

Anyone who chooses to walk in the ways of Jesus will bear the scar of living with His wisdom...and it's a beautiful scar.

Wisdom of the Cross vs. Wisdom of the World

Between 1:17 and 3:19, Paul uses the word "wisdom" 16x (between 1.17 and 3.19).

Beginning with [v17](#),

"Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

Paul is setting himself up here to launch into a beautiful stream of thought on God's wisdom...and how altogether different it is from the wisdom of this age. This is the NASB translation:

18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written:

“I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF THOSE WHO HAVE UNDERSTANDING, I WILL CONFOUND.”

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than mankind, and the weakness of God is stronger than mankind.

26 For consider your calling, brothers and sisters, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the insignificant things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no human may boast before God.

30 But it is due to Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

31 so that, just as it is written: **“LET THE ONE WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”**

1 And when I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come as someone superior in speaking ability or wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him

crucified.

3 I also was with you in weakness and fear, and in great trembling,

4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of mankind, but on the power of God.

There is wisdom of this world, as demonstrated through power, pride, and self-preservation and there is the wisdom of God...demonstrated through the weakness and self-sacrifice of the cross. You want to know what God's wisdom looks like? Just look at the cross. You want to receive God's wisdom? Then embrace the cross. "For the word of the cross may be foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

I find it interesting that both Paul and James (in [James 3](#)) still call the wisdom of this world "wisdom." It's "wisdom" but it's an inferior wisdom...it's carnal, worldly, James actually says it's demonic. It's a wisdom that is opposed to the cross, and in fact, Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 1 that this type of "wisdom" actually renders the cross powerless and empty (what the word in [v17](#) means, that the NKJV translates "of no effect").

The world looks at the cross and believes that is the height of weakness. Anyone found hanging on that tree, or following the One hanging on that tree, are just foolish. The rulers of the day saw the cross as anything but wisdom. A man claiming to be God's Son, the King of Israel, dying like a villain and fool - unclothed and undignified...this is absolute madness, not wisdom.

But in God's economy, the cross of Christ is the pinnacle wisdom. What looked like shame and insanity became, in fact, the vehicle of eternal salvation. When God raised Jesus from the dead and enthroned Him over all creation He showed us that through defeat comes victory, through weakness comes strength, through humiliation comes glory, through death comes life. Rather than being the ultimate expression of madness, the cross became the ultimate expression of God's wisdom.

So now, a crucial question stares us in the face; will we embrace God's cross-shaped wisdom, or will we see it as foolishness? Will we humble ourselves, admitting how foolish, weak, and utterly useless our philosophies and pursuits are? Will we follow the narrow path of this strange wisdom embodied by the Man hanging on the tree? When we face serious crisis, or we endure the challenges of daily life, do we fall back on the world's wisdom; resorting to fear, anger, manipulation, complaining, tension, or playing the victim? Or do we instead pray in the Spirit and search the Scriptures until God's unique, cross-centered wisdom becomes clear for that situation. God's wisdom may require us to remain silent under criticism, resisting the temptation to defend ourselves. God's wisdom will require us to forgive those who have wronged us, bless someone who hurt us, or pray in tongues for an hour to crucify the flesh that wants to respond when it is attacked. Any, and all, of these things may look foolish to the world. But they reflect the wisdom of the cross.

Gladstone says,

"If we are not willing to embrace the foolishness of the cross, neither can we encounter its wisdom. If we will not embrace its weakness, we cannot expect its power. O, how often we have tried to benefit from the cross' wisdom without welcoming its foolishness!"

To believe in God's wisdom requires the sacrifice of our old ways, and it will create friction with the world around us...and at times the world within us. That sacrifice will leave scars. Which is why anyone found living with God's wisdom will bear a mark of the cross on their souls. But choosing to walk in the wisdom of the cross opens us up to the power of a life lived in the Spirit. Which is why Paul moves next into a discussion on the role of the Spirit in revealing God's wisdom to those who love Him.

The Spirit or Wisdom

The book of Proverbs, obviously, has a lot to say about wisdom. A picture is painted of wisdom actually being a character, a spirit, that calls out for us to come to her.

Proverbs 1.20-21 says that wisdom,

"cries out in the streets; she raises her voice in the open squares. At the head of the

noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she declares her words."

In [v23](#) the spirit of wisdom promises to,

"pour out my spirit...and make known my words" to all who would turn to her and receive her correction."

The spirit of God's wisdom is not hiding, she is calling out in the streets. It's not a matter of finding wisdom; it's a matter of responding to wisdom that wants to be found...if wisdom is hiding then she's hiding in plain sight. Wisdom says in chapter 8,

"I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me. "

([Proverbs 8.17](#)).

And in [v32-35](#),

"blessed are those who keep my ways...Blessed is the person who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For one who finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD."

Solomon, the writer of most of the Proverbs, tells his son in [Proverbs 4.5-9](#),

"Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the primary thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you."