



WISDOM, PART ONE

If you had a piece of paper and a pencil and someone asked you what one of the major lifelong pursuits we have to accomplish might be, what would you write in a few sentences? What are you seeking to do? What are your goals and purposes? Here is one good answer: Our purpose in life as we seek to glorify God should be to change from being fools to being wise.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...Not many of you were wise by human standards...but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise...so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God. (1 Corinthians 1:18, 26, 27, 29, 30).

God's wisdom must be kept in this big picture as we deal with the details of our struggles. In order to help us in this task, we will look at some Biblical principles for guidance.

- 1. SIN REDUCES US TO FOOLS** – It is not just that we do bad things; that we destroy the good things God gives us, or that we have trouble being content and happy. Something more fundamental – the reason for the chaos and havoc in this fallen world-is found in the seeds of the foolishness that occurred in Genesis 3:6: *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. **The human attempt at getting wisdom apart from God is the source of all human foolishness.** The fact is, we are not structured to be wise apart from God. It is like trying to bake a cake in a washing machine – it just will not work.*
 - The first lie is the lie of autonomy
 - The second lie is the lie of self-sufficiencySin reduces us to fools, and we are not just talking about the unbeliever. As long as indwelling sin remains in us, there is a regression toward foolishness

Have you ever experienced your child ask you the night before a big school project: “Do we have any poster board, markers, glue, and extra old milk cartons lying around?” Perhaps you think differently than I do, but my first

question is: "How long have you known about this project?" If the answer is anything over "two days," my blood pressure rises and I find it very hard to consider that perhaps the child is suffering from some sort of serious mental problem. The truth is, the child is practicing PROCRASTINATION. Now there are times when someone will call me and I don't particularly want to talk to them. I will reason; "I can't give them all the time they need right now. Before I know it, I have forgotten it.

Foolishness is not just a way of thinking, but a state of being. It really does express itself in everything about who we are. It is the foolishness of our desires, purposes, emotions, and thinking. **FOOLISHNESS IS A DENYING OF GOD=A REMOVING OF GOD FROM HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE.**

2. OUR FOOLISHNESS, BY ITS VERY NATURE, IS IDOLATROUS because we are-in our own very nature-worshippers. Human beings cannot be divided into those who worship and those who don't.

Whenever we functionally or theologically remove God remove God from His rightful place, we will always find a "God replacement" This leads us toward numerous pitfalls. Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if:

=I have power and influence over others

+I am loved and respected by _____

=I have a particular kind of look

-I have a certain amount of pleasure or quality of life

*People are dependent on me

^Someone is there to protect me and keep me safe

+I'm highly productive and get a lot done

#I am recognized for my accomplishments and exceed in my field

+I gain a certain wealth and influence

_I have a great ideal of high morality

Life only has meaning and I only have worth if _____.

Cornelius Plantinga says it this way: “In an ego-centered culture, wants become needs (maybe even duties), the self replaces the soul, and human life degenerates into the clamor of degenerating autobiographies. People get fascinated with how they feel-and with how they feel about how they feel. In such a culture the self exists to be explored, indulged, and expressed but not disciplined or restrained. Self-centered religion, says David Wells, crowds out theology and objective truth. Theology becomes therapy...the Biblical interest in righteousness is replaced by a search for happiness, holiness by wholeness, truth by feeling, ethics by feeling good about one’s self. The world shrinks to the range of personal circumstances; the community of faith shrinks to a circle of personal friends. The past recedes. The church recedes. The world around even recedes. ALL THAT IS LEFT IS SELF.”

3. WE NEED TO BE RESCUED FROM OUR FOOLISHNESS.

Foolishness, if left unchecked, will begin to establish in us the worst of habits. This can even be seen in the life of the Christian. Many well meaning people in the evangelical church will isolate a need, and then reach into the Bible for insights that seem to address this need. But the individual’s heart is left untouched. The course of his or her life is left unchallenged, ambitions are left unchecked, the sinful nature is left unaddressed, and the fiber of his/her character is left unexposed.

This is seen in the fact that we treat the Bible like it is the ultimate “how-to” book. The term “biblical” needs to be redefined. It cannot mean merely “from somewhere within the pages of Scripture.” In light of the way the Bible is written, as a single fabric of thought reaching from front to back, biblical must mean “in keeping with what the Bible is about.” **The Bible is about God’s unstoppable passion to be known, loved, and served. Foolish people do not see this nor do they care.**

4. OUR HEART IDOLATRIES MUST BE ADDRESSED

We have seen that sin reduces us to fools; the nature of that foolishness is idolatry. FOOLISHNESS LIVES IN OUR BEHAVIOR BECAUSE IT FIRST LIVES IN OUR HEART. Idolatry is deceptive for two reasons:

1) It is hard for us to see and get a hold of because we tend to serve plausible idols. James 4:1 says that we are ruled by our “desires,” but he does not say evil desires. They may be evil desires, but for the most part they are acceptable desires. We want our lives to be free from suffering and hurt. We want love, respect, comfort, and order. These are not bad things, are they? But James goes on to say that these desires “BATTLE WITHIN US.” In other words, they take the turf of our lives and establish themselves as the functional and effective rulers of our lives.

The problem is not so much the desire. The problem is that the desire begins to rule our heart. Desire becomes a demand. Demand is expressed as a need that must be met. Needs lead us to certain expectations. Unfulfilled expectations lead us to disappointment. When we are disappointed, we find someone to punish.

2) The other way in which idolatry is deceptive is that it happens in the midst of our faith. Christians don't set out to construct idols to place in their den to worship. Instead, we construct idols in the midst of personal devotions and church attendance. In the midst of ministry, we can give our hearts away to other things. We create huge gaps between our confessional theology and our functional theology. The god of Tuesday just happens to be radically different from the God of Sunday.

THE BIGGEST IDOL OF ALL IS ME-OLGY.

Have you ever been sitting in traffic? STUCK! The thought pops in your mind: "Don't these people know I am in a hurry?" What an irrational thought that is! Of course they don't! That is Me-olotry at work. We have even turned evangelism into "Me-olotry. David Henderson comments: "It is a great temptation to make Christianity attractive to seekers by misrepresenting the faith as a relationship through Christ with a God who is the Divine vending machine in the sky, there to meet our every need."

5. AT THE HEART OF THIS RESCUE IS NOT A SYSTEM OF REDEMPTION BUT A LIVING, ACTIVE REDEEMER

Christ does not just correct our thinking, reorient our lives, and reconcile our relationships: HE EFFECTS OUR RESCUE. The Greeks knew that they needed wisdom (1 Corinthians 1: 20-25). However, their search was in a philosophical system. There is the Philosopher, the Psychologist, and the Sociologist. Their thought was, "Give me a logical argument and I will have wisdom.

But Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the Life." That is Jesus. This is radical. Truth is not an outline, but a Person. I can't replace Christ with the best of science. I can't replace Him with the best of logic. I can't replace Him with ethics. He is irreplaceable. At the heart of our need for rescue is not a system, but a redeemer.

6. WE FIND WISDOM AS WE SUBMIT TO AND TRUST IN CHRIST

Colossians 2 contains two radical Christological claims:

- "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ" (vs. 3)

"For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form." This means that the key to human functioning is Christ (vs. 9).

SIN EMPTIES US. THE ANSWER IS SUBMISSION TO CHRIST. This is laid out in three dominant themes:

- (1) GOD IS SOVEREIGN. HE IS IN CONTROL. REST IN HIM. A fool lives to try to establish power. A wise man knows that only God has power.
- (2) WE ARE GRACE DEPENDENT. WE CANNOT MEASURE UP. CHRIST IS OUR ONLY HOPE. There is no human experience that is so tragic and so deep that it is beyond the depth of Jesus Christ. A wise man is not afraid of His inability, because He knows that God's grace is sufficient.
- (3) THE WHOLE MOVEMENT OF LIFE IS TOWARD GOD. "For from Him and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory" (Romans 11:36) the wise man knows that the only true path to human blessing is to walk down the road of the glory of God. The fool knows no better than to live for himself.