

**Isaiah 9: 6 – “Christ, the Wonderful Counselor”, A Christmas Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 28th, 2014,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When you think of the word Wonderful what thoughts come to your mind? Probably someone or something that is amazing or astonishing; surprising or remarkable. When you think of the word Counselor, what comes to your mind? You probably think of someone who gives advise either in a psychological or a legal situation. But, as we approach this text today, we find these two words coupled together. They refer to Christ the Messiah. They can refer to none other. And our verse says that this is one of the Names by which He is called, Wonderful Counselor. The word counsel suggests that we have a problem and we need help sorting through it. The great problem of Mankind is both legal and moral in the sight of a holy God. We need good counsel on how to be saved from ourselves and from our sin, because we have broken God's commandments and we have lived our lives for our own pleasure and glory. Apart from Christ we are rebels who deserve punishment. We do not want to submit to God's righteous rule over our lives. But the reason that we think that way and live that way, is because the whole bent and direction of our lives, naturally, is away from God and toward sinful and selfish interests. You say to me, "If this is true, then why am I here this afternoon?" "Surely it is the right thing to do, to come to church and think about God isn't it?" "Doesn't this show that I am basically all right and don't need the counsel that you speak of?" Well, the first part of your statement is correct. It is a good thing to come to church and think about God and yourself in relation to God. But it is the second part of your question, the conclusion that you draw, that is entirely false and it may show that you have not, as yet, come to know God or had your sins forgiven. You may be coming to church to show God and others that you are a moral and caring person and that you take a personal interest in being good and doing good for other people. But you may have not seen the sinfulness of your heart as you should, as of yet. Every person, even a moral person, has a sinful heart irregardless of how moral an upbringing that they have had. A moral person needs this counsel that I will speak of, just as much as the vilest of sinners does. All men have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. All men need to have the Son of God to become, and to be, their counselor. Jesus Christ was sent into this fallen world to be the Wonderful Counselor of poor sinners and bewildered saints. When a person takes His counsel He shows them just how wonderful He is. "What is it," you say, "that makes Christ so wonderful in His counsel to those who believe in Him?" The answer is that Christ's counsel is Wonderful to believers because of who He is, and what He does for them. Let me make 3 observations of this:

1st- Christ's counsel is Wonderful to poor sinners and to bewildered saints, because He identifies with us in our fallen predicament and did something about it.

It was the Wonderful counsel of the Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son in eternity past that set the stage for giving of God's greatest gift to mankind. In this holy counsel, it was determined by the blessed persons of the holy trinity in the Godhead, that man should be created, and that he should be created a reasonable, responsible being who would live to the glory of God. He would be given freedom of will to choose life and obedience to a holy command that God would give to the first man created, as a Representative Head. This would be a Covenant of Works between God and the first man Adam. It was ordained and decided by God, that Adam would be left to the freedom of his own will, and thus he would fall into sin. God permitted this in order that all people might come to understand that God, out of love, would have each person to be dependent upon Him; to be dependent upon the glorious grace of His only Begotten Son. He would have men to see that all good things come to them from Him, through Christ. All things would thus be summed up in Christ, and glory would redound to God.

And so, in the Covenant of Redemption, God the Son agreed to fulfill the conditions of the 2nd Covenant which was proposed, namely, the covenant of grace; that our Lord Jesus Christ would become the Representative Head of all those whom God would elect to save from this fall, which was brought about by Adam. This was truly wonderful counsel. The 1st Covenant with Adam was undertaken between the 2 parties; God and Adam as friends. Adam violated the commandment, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and thus he fell from his original righteousness. He brought himself into the captivity of sin, and he fell under God's curse and wrath. He had no means to redeem himself. He had no means to retrieve himself. He had no means to pay for the damage that he done by his sin, to God's violated will for him. Someone would have to undertake for him, and that someone would be Jesus Christ.

Turn with me to Isaiah 42: 1- 9. You can see from verse 1 of the chapter who is being spoken of in these verses. He is called God's Servant, His Elect One in whom My soul delights, says God. This is our Lord Jesus who was given the Spirit without measure. This is God's Son who covenanted with the Father to undertake to bring Justice to the Gentiles. By justice is meant Christ's ability to purchase for His people their acceptance before God, and His ability to carry on His work in their hearts. He would be able to give to God's Elect, grace abundant, which would be the principle of His kingdom's advance. He would be able to repair the damage that we as sinners have done to the honor of God, to make satisfaction for the offense which we have given to God by our disobedience. In this description of our Savior, we find one who would do something on behalf of poor helpless sinners, we find that He would not break the bruised reed, and He would not quench the smoking flax. He would not fail or be discouraged in all this courageous work of redemption, but rather, He would succeed where men where men would be overwhelmed and fail. I wonder how many people are here this afternoon who feel like a bruised reed or a smoking flax? Christ has been given by the Father as a covenant to the people. And a part of that covenant is counsel. Wonderful counsel, good news, good tidings of great joy which is for you this day! You and I, if we are wise people will see that we are not strong in ourselves. We are like bruised reeds. We need to be forgiven of our sins, yes; but we need to have our wounds treated as well. Sin beats us up and wounds us. It could be other people's sin, or our own. Conviction of sin bruises us as well. Crosses take their toll on God's dear children and they feel bruised and about ready to break. What do you do? Run to the secular psychologist for help? No you run to Jesus, you fall into His loving arms. You pray for his wise counsel of the promises and commandments of His word.

You and I, as believers are like smoking flax. We are a mixture of the new nature of grace, which is fire; and the old nature of fleshly lusts and self-determination, which dampen the fire of grace. We are something like flax, which is smoking. We want our obedience to be passionate; we want it to break into flame, but it is too dampened to burst into flame. So, too, you and I want to be on fire for God. We want to be on fire in our holy passion for obedience to God's word, and yet we are failing in many ways. Our flax is smoking and we fear that because of our sinful weaknesses, that God may put it out. But God's promises are the wonderful counsel of what Jesus will do for you. He will not quench the good work of grace in your soul even if it is small, even if it is smoking. Even though it seems as if it is going out. He comes to open blind eyes, as it says in verse 7. He comes to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. He comes to be the Wonderful counselor who died to give to us all the precious and magnificent promises of His Word to sustain us and to speak to us by. This He has done by identifying with us in our fallen predicament and He did something about it.

Now 2ndly- Christ's counsel is Wonderful to poor sinners and bewildered saints because He is fully qualified to look into your hearts and mind, and to tell you what you need, and lead you into what you need.

Some of you might be saying, “I just do not understand how the counsel of Jesus to my soul can be made real to me, to change me to become someone who is pleasing to God.” Let me tell you this afternoon that the Lord Jesus is a very expert counselor. He is perfectly well-qualified for this work of changing your heart. Turn with me over to Colossians 2: 2. “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” The Apostle Paul is talking here of the great burden that he had for those who had never seen his face. He knew that sometimes Christians do not attain to the riches of a full assurance of understanding because they do not see the greatness and glory of Christ as they ought. They do not know, or they do not think often enough, of how Christ has in His person all these treasures. In fact, in 1st Corinthians 1: 24 it says, “to those who are called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” This wisdom Paul wants us to draw upon, individually, and together as a church. We must pray that it will come to us from the Wonderful Counselor who applies it. There is real wisdom that comes to God’s saints through their praying, and through their meditating in God’s word, and through their using that wisdom to strive to be righteous and holy; faithful and true, even as Christ is. I want you to see how this counsel is given by our Lord and Savior.

Turn with me with me to Isaiah chapter 11. Here we read: “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Now, notice, that there is a coupling together in the description of our Savior’s anointed human nature; counsel and might. These were seen, evidenced in many ways in His public ministry during His life; and they are still there, available to His church, even now. He faithfully makes these over to believers as they look to Him for them. There is real power in listening to his counsel. It is found first of all in the gospel. You can go to Him as one, who it says in verse 3, “ shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness He will judge the poor.” You and I, if we are believing in the Lord Jesus, we realize that we are poor in spirit. He is not going to look at you with all your sinful problems and difficulties and turn you away, when you are crying to Him for wisdom. Our Lord Jesus does not judge according to appearances. He is able to see things in our lives most clearly and address them through His counsel if we will receive it.

Turn with me over to Revelation 3: 14 -20. Here we find our Lord saying that He knows the works of Laodiceans. They are neither cold nor hot in the service of God, a state which is very displeasing to Him. It makes Him feel ill to think about it. What does he see? He sees a false security, a unholy, independent self-sufficiency, which has blinded them to their true heart condition before Him. They had material and earthly wealth and because they did, they thought that they needed nothing more. They did not know, He says, that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked in His sight and from His viewpoint. They did not see their true needs. And they were willing to be satisfied with something less, something earthly, something that would pass away and would leave them in a wretched and miserable state if they continued in it. They were not pursuing after righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2: 22) So He says, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” This is His counsel to them, and His counsel to all who are church going, but who do not pursue after and “buy” the most valuable things; the spiritual riches of knowledge and

understanding which will cleanse and sanctify the heart and soul. “Buy the truth and sell it not,” it is said in the book of Proverbs. (Proverbs 23: 23) “Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Wisdom is gold because when it is obtained a house can be built, a life can be built. “Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” (Proverbs 24; 3, 4) “A wise man is strong, yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” This is the kind of counsel that the Lord Jesus gives. He counsels repentance. He uses rebuke. He will chasten His children when they do not see that the things of the heart, the spiritual devotion and interaction of the heart with Himself are the most important thing.

Then 3rdly, finally, and briefly- Christ’s counsel is Wonderful to poor sinners and bewildered saints because He is excellent in guidance.

Turn with me to Isaiah 28: 23-39. You say to me: The Christian life seems way too difficult for me to live. I know that the Lord will have to discipline me often to keep me on the path of righteousness. Yes, every child of God must and will have discipline. If you are without discipline you are illegitimate and not sons. No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. But even here the counsel of Christ is Wonderful. “Give ear and hear my voice, listen and hear my speech. Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow? Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods? When he has leveled its surface, does he not sow the black cummin and scatter the cummin, plant the wheat in rows, the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in its place? For He instructs him in right judgment, His God teaches him. For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin; but the black cummin is beaten out with a stick, and the cummin with a rod. Bread flour must be ground; therefore he does not thresh it forever, break it with his cartwheel, or crush it with his horsemen. This also comes from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.”

Let me ask you if you understand the spiritual meaning of these words to you this afternoon? God is not just speaking to farmers in these verses. He is speaking of Christ’s working in and through the preaching of His word; of His leading you into and through situations where your heart is like the ground, and the produce to come from it, is your sanctification. There are things to be plowed up and things to be planted. There is a definite providential pressure which God applies to your life so that you might become grain which is crushed to make bread to feed others. Christ is the good husbandman. He is the Wonderful Counselor. His Father has instructed Him well, in right judgment; His God and Father taught Him. You and I are the black cummin. He will crush us at points to teach us, and He will bring us to the place where we will do His will. But He will not thresh us forever, or break us with his cartwheel. He wants you to know, even now, that He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in guidance. He will take you by the hand and lead you on by His counsel all the way to heaven. You remember what it says in Psalm 73: 21 when the psalmist realized the end of the wicked rich? It says, “Surely you set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.” “Oh how they are brought to desolation in a moment!” “They are utterly consumed with terrors.” “As a dream when one awakes, so Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.” “Thus my heart was grieved and I was vexed in my mind.” “I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.” “Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand, You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” This is our full assurance of understanding. This is where we shall see the face of the One whose counsel has been so wonderful. “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” “Now I know, but then I shall know just as I am known.” That is

just how great my Savior is and how wise His counsel. He will spiritually take me by the hand and guide me to heaven.