

**Ecclesiastes 9: 16-18a; “Wisdom is Better than Strength”, Message # 66
in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, A Bible Study prepared
for the evening of December 28th, 2011, and conducted
by Pastor Paul Rendall at the Rendall home.**

I think that it is good for us to remember that all of the Scriptures are meant ultimately to point us to our Lord Jesus Christ and the wisdom that is in Him. The Scriptures are not meant to simply give us ethical principles to live by; which we will then learn, somehow, apart from the living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, and go about to do them. A sincere Christian does not want to be wise in a worldly sense. A person can be wise in regard to worldly things and totally unwise in spiritual things. All the right ethical precepts and righteous moral principles of the Word of God do stand as an authoritative testimony to the will of God for every person in every generation. But salvation from sin, and having eternal life are based upon finding, by grace, the One and only Person who can deliver your soul from spiritual death and give you the wisdom which will lead you to eternal life. So let us this evening pursue wisdom from that vantage point; the vantage point of knowing and remembering the One poor wise man who by His wisdom has delivered the “city” (His Church) from sin and Satan. Let us remember that in our Lord Jesus Christ we will find the wisdom which will be saving and profitable in every sense to our soul. 1st of all - We want to look at fact that when we know Christ, wisdom is better than strength. Then 2ndly – We want to see that when we know Christ, the words of wise men spoken quietly should be heard. And 3rd - We will hope to see that when we know Christ, wisdom is better than weapons of war.

1st of all – When we know Christ, wisdom is better than strength.

Verse 16 – “Then I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” “Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.” Here Solomon states the principle; wisdom is better than strength. When we remember from verse 15 that this poor wise man was not stronger in a fleshly or physical sense, than the forces which came against Him; yet he was, by His wisdom, able to deliver the whole city from the great king which came against it; we see that wisdom is indeed better than strength. There were only a few men in the city who were even capable of becoming fighting men, who could fight against this king; who we have said represents Satan. But they could not by their own wisdom and strength deliver the “city” which was being besieged by him. Let us observe that our adversary, Satan, is greater than we are in our natural strength. Yet this one poor man (Christ), we saw last time, had the wisdom which wrought deliverance for all who will believe in Him. If we take this poor wise man of the parable as being the Lord Jesus Christ, we can readily understand what is being said here. The Lord Jesus Christ knew how to deal with issues related to God’s righteousness and how it would be satisfied. He also knew the schemes of the Devil to destroy

the souls of men, because of His sinful pride. And, He knew perfectly the weakness and inability of our sinful flesh to do and keep the commandments of God. So, according to His knowledge of these things, He acted wisely. Turn with me to Isaiah 11: 1-3. "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 of the fear of the Lord." "His delight is in the fear of the Lord, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears..." The Spirit of wisdom rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ when He came into this world in His Incarnation. And His wisdom and understanding grew; even as He grew up. His greatest delight, it says here, was in the fear of the Lord. He always sought to please God in everything that He did; even from His youth up.

You can see this if you will turn over to Luke 2: 41-46. It says here, "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover." "And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast." "When they had finished the days, as they returned the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem." "And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances." "So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him." "Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." "And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." "So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son why have You done this to us?' "Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." "And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me?' "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" "But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them." "Then He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart." "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

You can see from this, that wisdom is the right application of knowledge. The Lord Jesus being truly spiritually wise, readily received the true knowledge of the Scriptures from godly teachers when He had this opportunity. He listened to them and He asked them questions. He then took that true knowledge of the Bible, and applied it to the things which He was seeking to do for God and other men. He knew that He had to; first and foremostly of all, to "be about His Father's business". And yet He also saw that true spiritual wisdom did not originate in His own human nature and that He needed to be subject to His parents and He came to understand that He was born under the God's law. In nothing did He sin. He understood that He needed true knowledge from the Scriptures, and that He needed God's filling Him with wisdom and understanding in relation to that truth. It was something that He increased in. And; as He increased in wisdom, He came

to realize that that it would be better to have wisdom than simply having physical strength or mental genius. This is what gave Him the ability to glorify God in everything that He did. God's wisdom is better than our natural strength of understanding, because it will teach us not to trust in ourselves to be able to do and keep God's law. By faith in Christ, we are given the grace of wisdom from Christ the Perfect Man, to turn away from evil. Christ had this in Himself. We do not. We must learn to seek Christ for this wisdom and strength to do be able to do God's will. In this holy sense that we are speaking of; wisdom is always better than our natural physical strength, or even having great mental intelligence or business savvy. The poor man's wisdom is always related to humility and receiving God's Word with a view to doing it. This is what the Lord Jesus was able to do perfectly because there was no sin in His nature. He had a perfect love for God and men. This is the true wisdom and strength which is despised by men because they do not think that they can achieve their earthly goals by pursuing and living out the wisdom of God. This wisdom is often despised, not only by unbelievers, but also by Christians who are more interested in pursuing selfish earthly goals, rather than Christ's wisdom. Let it not be so in your case dear reader.

2ndly – We want to see that when we know Christ, the words of wise men spoken quietly should be heard.

Verse 17 – “Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.” I believe that the words of the wise are the words which wise men speak having learned the truth of them from the Bible. They are spoken by men who have come to have the experience of the truth of those words teach them wisdom, and they would then communicate them to others so as to help them to come to know what is right, and do what is right. Turn with me over to 2 Timothy 3: 13-15 says, “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which in Christ Jesus.” Evil men and imposters will often think that if they can just raise their voice high enough, or speak their words forcibly enough, that they shall then prevail over people around them. But the Apostle Paul knew that even a mother or a father speaking the truth of the Scriptures in quietness to their children, will be teaching them the wisdom which will lead them to salvation. What does it say of the Lord Jesus in regard to His preaching and teaching? Did He raise His voice? Turn to Matthew 12: 18 – “Behold My Servant whom I have chosen, My beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!” “I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles.” “He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.” The Old Testament passage from which this is taken, is found in Isaiah 42: 2 – “He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” When a person would teach others, he should understand that

shouting at them is not the way to do it. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit and has wisdom, he knows how to speak to people quietly and directly, and this will accomplish everything that is needful and good. To be powerful or skillful does not require being loud and forceful.

The words of the wise spoken in quietness should be heard because many things can be built to the glory of God by such instruction. We have seen the example of it with children. Now let us see it with regard to adults. Turn with me to Exodus 28, verse 3. These are God's instructions to Moses concerning how the holy garments should be made for Aaron and his sons to minister as priests. "So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest." Notice how God says that He was the one who had filled these gifted men with the knowledge of how to make these holy garments, but still they were to be made according to the Word of God to Moses. We can apply this, this way to ourselves. We may have been given a skill, or many skills by God. God has given us strength of wisdom in that way. But still the actual use of our skills and abilities is to be governed by the will of God, rather than simply by our own understanding or strength to be able to do or make a thing. This will involve trusting in God to guide us; whether we are the teacher or the learner, in the use of the physical and mental strength that we have been given, and not trusting in our own understanding. Turn with me over to Proverbs 3, verse 5. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil." "It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones."

Notice that to be truly wise, you cannot lean on your own understanding; your own observations and opinions concerning the many things that you would do according to your thoughts apart from the Word of God. As you think about your own life, you will be thinking about what you should do with your time here upon the earth; how you will spend your strength; what you will take pains to learn to do for yourself, or for others, or for God. If you lean upon your own understanding, it will only lead to your thinking of yourself as wise in your own eyes. You won't become wise in God's sight by thinking this way. You must learn God's way. You should permit yourself to be taught God's way by sitting under godly Christian teachers who know His Word; not simply allowing yourself to be instructed by earthly teachers who are skilled in some branch of knowledge or some skill in an earthly physical sense alone. "The words of the wise spoken quietly, should be heard." When a person is wise in their own eyes, they will not turn away from evil as the Bible defines it. They will continue to be a proud and un-teachable person in this regard. When a person does turn away from evil, then it will truly strengthen their flesh and their bones; their body. That is not the main object of

turning away from evil; to find better physical health. The main object itself is to obey and to glorify God. But the way to come to do this, is to fear the Lord.

Looking at other verses on this holy fear will confirm this for you; that this is the right course for your heart and life to take. Proverbs 14: 26 and 27 – “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.” But we are told in Romans 3: 18 that this fear of the Lord is not something that is found naturally in us. “There is no fear of God before their (the unbeliever’s) eyes.” So we should be able to see by now in our study, that the fear of the Lord comes through faith in the One poor wise man that we have been speaking of. Isaiah 33: 5 says, “The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.” “Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure.” Since it says in Colossians Chapter 2, verse 3 that in Christ, “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”, you could read this verse in this way – “Having Christ, and having the saving knowledge of Him; it will be the stability of your times, and He will be the strength of your salvation. The fear of the Lord which comes through Christ is His treasure; His gift to you through grace.

Now 3rdly, and finally - We should see that when we know Christ, wisdom is better than weapons of war.

Verse 18 says, “Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.” Many people in our own day think that if our country has the latest technology in connection with the weapons which are created; that we will be safe. But having the wisdom of God and walking in the fear of God all the day long is really the safest defense in peace and the best offense in war. Turn with me to Psalm 44, verse 4. “You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob.” “Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.” “For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me.” “But you have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.” “In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever.” Notice that the Psalmist affirms that his weapons could not possibly save him in the day of battle. He could not trust in his bow and think to conquer his enemies by placing his trust there. But in God he could put his trust and then boast in what God enabled him to do, by His strength and the power of His grace. This is wisdom; a wisdom which is better than weapons of war. Let’s close with look at Psalm 20, verse 6 – “Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.” “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” And what is the name of the Lord our God but our Lord Jesus Christ who sits at the Father’s right hand? Let us not forget the One poor but wise man that has destroyed the great king who has come against our soul to destroy it; the One who has all the wisdom that we need to live our life to the glory of God.