

How to Own Wisdom – 2:1-9

INTRODUCTION

Holding a Bible in our hands or displaying Bibles on our book shelves or downloading many versions of the Bible into our PDA or mobile phone does not mean that we know God's Word. Obtaining many diplomas and paper qualifications from reputable seminaries or Bible Colleges does not mean that we possess wisdom. Having the Word of God near us or in our pockets is not the same as having the Word of God inside us. This is a dangerous trend. It has lulled many professing Christians into a false sense of closeness to God. This has led to complacency and a false sense of spirituality. It is a dilution of Christianity in these last days that needs the strongest dosage of spirituality the world has never seen. However, the world is irreparably let down by Christendom that projects a Christianity bankrupt of the Truth. The church has become like the world where it has become impotent to shine any spiritual light. Its darkness is pervasive and has spread to the millions of professing Christians. Sincerity and carnality have insidiously displaced the wisdom of God. The true and faithful remnant few must keep the flickering light of Christ burning in their lives if this light can no longer be found in local churches today. To do this, true believers must possess the wisdom from the LORD.

Memorization of God's Word must not be construed as possessing the wisdom of God either. Memorizing Scripture has its benefits. One of these benefits is to recall the Word of God at will and to recite it in times of need for encouragement. However, when God's Word is not memorized with proper contextual understanding, it can do more harm than good. The Word of God can be applied wrongly to life's situations. For example, the verse of **Philippians 4:13** (KJV) that says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," has been applied many times by well meaning believers to situations such as running a race or taking an exam or climbing a mountain, etc. The immediate context is one of contentment in the life of the apostle Paul where he was able to conduct himself in a godly manner in times of material abundance or poverty. Those who apply God's Word out of its proper context would probably argue that it is true that Christ can strengthen when we run a race or climb a mountain. Yes, Christ can strengthen anyone, and not only believers, to run a race or climb a mountain. However, this is not the verse to appeal to for that application. Perhaps the believer can go to Psalm 18 instead. The context of Philippians 4:13 is of daily sustenance and how every believer ought to be content with his daily needs as the LORD knows best. If he has to endure sufferings and hunger for the faith, he must not complain but rejoice in the LORD because the LORD knows what is best for His child. Paul was languishing in a dark, damp, dirty and rat infested dungeon when he penned these words. The reason for proper application of God's Word is to respect the integrity of God's Word and not to use it like a blind man swatting a fly. The injunction from God is that every believer must rightly divide the Word of God (2 Tim 2:15).

To own wisdom is to possess the ability to apply the Word of God correctly in all the circumstances of life. If the believer is confronted by an erroneous doctrine, he is able to know why it is wrong and to explain why it is wrong and what ought to be the right doctrine. If the believer is in a dire circumstance, he is endowed with the spiritual acumen to make the right choice for his life that will glorify the LORD. In short, the wisdom of God enables the child of God to live a life of service holy and acceptable before God and all men.

How does the child of God attain this wisdom?

- I. **PAYS CLOSE ATTENTION – 2:1-2** – Paying attention is not good enough. It has to be paying close attention to the teaching of God's Word. Coming to church week after week without obeying the Word that was preached is futile.

- a. The Word of God has to be received (v 1). Literally it means to take and hold the Word of God in one's hand. He will not let go of it. He will not be distracted by anything. He will not exchange it for anything. He finds it, takes hold of it and dies with it in his hand. No matter what the persecution or the seduction, he will never forsake the Word of God. Using synonymous parallelism, Solomon drives home the point by saying that it is similar to hiding the Word of God within the person. He hides it because he considers the Word of God as a treasure. The word for "hide" is the word for "treasure up."
- b. The condition is a real condition. IF this is done by every believer, then every believer will receive what is promised in the apodosis (the "then" clause). The reward is guaranteed. It is unlike a prospector who spends his entire life up in the mountain mining for gold. He faces dangers from wild animals, red Indians, and the deadly heat of summer or the freezing cold of winter and might not find anything but die all alone. His efforts and sacrifices are wasted. However, this is not true of the believer. There is more than enough treasure for all. There is no lack from the LORD. It is guaranteed IF the believer will pay close attention.
- c. The external must be matched by the internal. Here, Solomon says that he is to incline his ear to wisdom, which means to prick up one's ears to listen because what he has heard is of great value and interest to him. He will not fall asleep and even if he is sleepy, the moment he hears the Word of God pertaining to life and eternity, he becomes wide awake instantly. It is like a man with a mountain of debt. He was half awake when he opened the door of his home in the middle of the night and was told by the messenger that he has inherited 100 million dollars from his long lost multi-millionaire uncle who has just died and he is the only heir to his fortune. Sleep departs from him immediately. He jumps for joy. He cannot believe his ears. All his debts can be paid and his life from henceforth will be richly taken care of. His children's education and his days on earth are secured. He does not have to live from hand to mouth any longer. This is what happens to the person who knows that he holds in his hand the very Word of God that can take care of all his days on earth and into eternity! He knows he will be in heaven and this hope can never be taken from him.
- d. The synonymous parallelism used in verse 2 is to emphasize the point. The Word of God embraced will cause the heart to incline toward the direction of God and His will. The believer's ambitions will be replaced by God's ambitions for him. He is no longer interested and bothered by what he wants. He now desires to please God only. His heart and life are transformed supernaturally. He cannot help but be a new person. Old haunts are avoided and replaced by places of worship. He once despised Bible Study but now it becomes his daily sustenance and his new desire and love in life. Old acquaintances will become strangers as he finds no common bond with them. He hates sins and loves holiness. He thinks like God more and more as he obeys God's Word more and more. He sees the Word afresh with God's eyes. He understands his origin and his end by studying from Genesis to Revelation. He believes in them and takes concrete steps to change his life in light of these truths.

II. POSSESSES INTENSE DESIRE – 2:3-4 – This new life is sustained. It is not a flash-in-the-pan experience that is only good for the moment and is surrendered as a childish dream when he now "owns" the world with cash in the bank and worldly accolades at his feet. This new life is a life of no return. It is likened to finding the pearl of great price and he will sell all that he possesses in order to buy it. He will never give it up or sell it or exchange it for anything on this earth.

- a. To sustain this intense desire, his heart is like a burning fire as hot as the centre of the sun! Solomon describes it as one who cries after knowledge (v 3). He shouts out loud for this

knowledge. He is consumed by this intense desire for the Word of God. He will not be put down or discouraged. Even if no one wants it, he will not be discouraged. He is not disheartened by the actions of others. He is not ashamed by the mockery or others calling him a fool for wanting that which no one wants. Others may spend their time in other activities, but he spends his time taking hold of God's Word. Like the previous two verses, verse 3 is another synonymous parallelism to emphasize the importance of the point. Unless the believer is single-minded and lets the world know that his heart is consumed by the knowledge of God's Word, it will be difficult to keep this intensity alive.

He is not afraid to let others know. He is never discouraged by the discouragement of others. He is not affected by the majority view. He knows what the best is and is not ashamed or afraid to show it. He shouts out loud and lifts his voice to the whole world that the Word of God is worth holding on to for dear life and will not ever let it go. People may call him a fool to exchange his time and talent for the studying of God's Word but he knows better.

- b. He seeks after it like one who seeks after silver or hid treasure (v 4). He knows its value when he owns it. His is a treasure beyond measure. He is prepared to pay any price to get and own this priceless treasure. How does one seek after silver? He will sacrifice all to go into the ground where the silver can be found. He puts his life in danger to mine for it. The mine could collapse but the reward of glittering silver makes it worth the risk. He invests money and time to reap the silver which he hopes will be of greater value than what he has put in. A mine in Texas was closed in 1942 because the price of silver was low and it was not worth the cost of mining. However, investors have revived this silver mine because silver prices have tripled since 2009 and it is now worth the cost.

The work is laborious. It takes time and patience, like looking for hid treasure. This is another example of synonymous parallelism. The emphasis is the same as before. Some portions of God's Word are easy to understand but to know more deeply the truth of God, much work has to be put in. There is no short cut to gaining hidden treasure; otherwise it would not be hid treasure for long if it is so easy to find! Many portions of God's Word require intense study and prayer to be understood. Sacrifices have to be made. Dangers might have to be faced. Top priority and single mindedness is the key to finding silver. No obstacle should stand in the way. In the past, water was used in mining to wash away all obstacles. Dynamite and other methods have been used today to get at the silver that is buried thousands of feet underground. If there is a will, there is a way – this is the philosophy of these miners because they KNOW the reward is worth it all! This same determination should be applied to the study of God's Word in order to maintain and sustain this search for knowledge and understanding.

III. DIVINE UNDERSTANDING GRANTED – 2:5-6 – The apodosis reveals that the believer will surely understand the fear of the LORD, i.e. he will definitely find the knowledge of God. As mentioned earlier, this reward is guaranteed by God.

- a. Why did Solomon say that the believer will understand the fear of the LORD? (v 5). The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. This is the starting point of true wisdom.

How does understanding the fear of the LORD be equivalent to finding the knowledge of God? When a sinner fears the LORD, he will not want to remain in the state of enmity with the LORD. As the LORD's enemy, the wrath of God continues to hang over his head. The judgement of God, which is death itself, can fall on him at any time. He did not know it then. Now he knows. How does he know? One of the ways is through the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) which God gave to us to reveal to us how great sinners all human beings are.

There is no exception. Lying, lusting of the eyes and flesh are all heinous sins that justify God sending very sinner to Hell. Now the sinner must deal with his sinful state.

The only way is to believe in Jesus Christ as his LORD and Saviour. Jesus Christ came as the sinless Son of God and Son of Man when He was born into this world through the virgin Mary. Christ came to die for sinners' sins, that sinners might repent and be saved. God accepted all that Christ did for mankind by raising Him from the dead on the third day. If anyone believes in the LORD Jesus Christ from his heart and confesses Christ as His LORD and Saviour, he will be saved (Romans 10:9-10). This is God's promise. The sinner is become a new creature. He is born again. His life is transformed from inside out. He is able to see spiritually and understands the eternal truths of God as revealed in Holy Scriptures. He knows his origin (read Genesis) and he also knows his end (read Revelation). His life is lived in light of this God-given knowledge. He becomes a new person in Christ. His ambitions, his purpose in life and his motivation in life have all been transformed by the power of God according to Holy Scriptures. The Ten Commandments that once condemned him are now the light to his feet in living a holy life. He loves to obey God's Word. He loves to pray to his Heavenly Father whom he now loves with all his heart, soul strength and mind. This is a general description of what it means to have found the knowledge of God.

- b. However, the believer or sinner saved by grace must realize that it is God who helps him and enables him to understand God's Word and to live a holy life. This keeps him humble so that he does not fall into the sin of pride. Solomon reveals that it is the LORD who gives wisdom (v 6). This wisdom is a gift from God. Arrogance is a sin and there must be no boasting or self righteous condemnation of others who are not saved. The believer must never forget that he is saved and enabled to understand the knowledge of God because of God's grace and mercy. It is not the sinner's IQ that enables him to understand God's truth; neither is it his diligence or ability to memorize chunks of Bible passages. The natural man cannot understand spiritual things. He can understand only the natural realm. His IQ and hard work have no power to penetrate into the spiritual realm. The spiritual man understands spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2). The believer is a spiritual man because at the point when he becomes a child of God, Christ baptizes him with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit indwells the believer instantaneously. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes him a spiritual man, and opens his spiritual eyes to see and believe the Word of God.

Out of whose mouth come knowledge and understanding? Verse 6b has to refer to the LORD. Knowledge and understanding come out of the LORD's mouth. This knowledge and understanding is not about science or arts or any kind of liberal arts subjects taught in universities. It is the very word of God. It is only in God and through His holy and perfect Word that we find God's Truth. The BIBLE is always the very word of God, perfect and trustworthy. No matter what man may say or do to undermine the veracity and perfection of God's Word, man will fail. Only fools will believe the lies, to support and tolerate cunningly devised deceptions. However, only God's children are able to see and grasp the truth that if the Word of God has mistakes, even in the minutest of detail, even in its jot and tittle, then the Word of God has been diminished. Doubts will creep in and the believer's faith will be shaken. God is the source of all spiritual knowledge and understanding which are found in the Word of God. To hold the Word of God in highest esteem is to bestow the highest honour to God. The believer cannot separate God from His Word. To know God is to know the Word and to know the Word is to know God.

IV. PROMISED REWARD EXPERIENCED – 2:7-8 – When the believer diligently seeks after God with an intense desire, the LORD will give to him understanding and wisdom generously. This means that the believer is blessed immediately and does not need to wait until the LORD returns.

- a. God lays up, i.e. treasures up for the righteous sound wisdom (v 7). The only righteous ones are the true believers of Jesus Christ. This is the imputed righteousness given by the LORD to all believers when they are saved. It is like a king who stores up his treasure, waiting for his children to grow up and claim and benefit from this treasure that has been kept safe. God waits for sinners to become saints so that He can give out His precious wisdom. It is not just wisdom but sound wisdom. It is wisdom that cannot be wrong. It is wisdom that is always right and leads to everlasting life when obeyed. It is wisdom that is perfect and will always bring good to those who obey. There is no dross or lies in this wisdom. It is inerrant, infallible in all that it claims and teaches; whether it refers to the past, present or future, the righteous will be able to see it and claim it.

God is a buckler, i.e. a shield to them who continue to walk uprightly. This is a synthetic parallelism where the second line adds to the thought mentioned in the first. When this wisdom is embraced and obeyed from the heart, the LORD will be the believer's protector. Nothing bad can ever happen to God's children. If God's children have strayed away and become wayward, the LORD will chastise them and draw them back to Himself. They will feel the pain and the hurt from God's chastisement but it will result in their return to the LORD and cessation from sin. In this way, it is still good for God's children. In the case of obedient children, they will face trials and persecution for their faith. The LORD allows these adversities to come that His children might grow in faith and grace and knowledge of God. Their head knowledge will turn to experiential knowledge. The sovereignty of God is the basis for this blessed truth.

- b. God keeps the paths of judgement and preserves the way of His saints (v 8). This has to be the natural outcome of the LORD's sovereign protection. The way of the saints is also called the paths of judgement. This is a synonymous parallelism used for emphasis. The direction of the child of God will be in God's continuous care and oversight. His future is in God's loving hand whereby God will always give to His children the very best. However, God's children must be obedient to His holy and perfect Word. If they are disobedient and fall into sin, then they will enter into God's punitive will and not His desiderative will. The consequences will be painful to bear and even after repentance and God's forgiveness, the earthly consequences will still have to be experienced. For example, if a child of God disobeys the clear teaching of God's Word and marries an unbeliever, he will bear the consequences of his disobedience. After he has realized his sin and repented of it, he cannot divorce his spouse but must remain married. He will have to live with the trials that will come and pray for God's mercy to save her one day.

When God's children reject God's protection and venture out on their own into sin, they will pay the price. However, the obedient believer will live a rich and very abundant life, not in terms of dollars and cents but spiritual wealth such as peace of mind and a close walk with God. He will enjoy a victorious and meaningful daily walk with God. This is the LORD's immediate blessing to all His obedient children.

CONCLUSION – The apodosis used here is for emphasis, which is similar to what has been mentioned in verses 5-8. With the understanding of God in the believer’s heart, his life is lived to God’s glory. The child of God has the best sense of justice because his justice is based upon God’s perfect Word. He knows what is right and wrong and there are very few “grey” areas in his life, if at all. He makes right judgements when confronted by problems that might have stumped him when he was an unbeliever. Now he makes the right decision because his judgement is according to Holy Scripture. He is fair in his judgement. He treats all alike and without prejudice. Every good path is ordered by the LORD. As a student, the LORD guides him in all that he does. When he becomes an adult, the LORD continues to guide him in the choice of a life partner and his job, including how he should raise his family. When God’s wisdom is found, the life of the sinner is transformed instantaneously. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus for eternity!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How real is God’s Word in your life?
2. How well do you know God’s Word? Are you satisfied with your progress in the knowledge of God’s Word thus far? Share your Bible study programme with your group.
3. Do you believe that God’s Word is perfect or do you believe that it has a few so-called insignificant mistakes? Do you mind if the Bible is said to have 1% of insignificant mistakes? Would you defend God’s Word if someone says that to you?
4. How has your life been transformed since the day you became a Christian (thinking, way of life, ambition)? In what way has it changed? Is this change obvious to the people who have known you since before you became a Christian?