

The Sufficiency of God's Wisdom Part 3

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-45

It continually is pointed out to me the egotism of man. He is unbelievably bold to assume that he can come up with wisdom to explain the inexplicable, to solve all spiritual problems. Man imagines that he has enough insight to get below the surface of the human skin, as it were, and delve deeply into the human heart and bring about real transformation. You hear people say, "Well, the solution to our problems today are bound up in the fact that we've got to get people in the proper kind of therapy...we've got to educate people properly...we've got to make the proper provision for their physical needs...we need to provide for them the finest kind of leadership...and given these opportunities, we can change men...we can change their hearts...we can solve the deepest problems of their souls." And, of course, this is an illusion. But this is the lie that is continually being propagated today. Man imagines that his wisdom is sufficient to solve the needs of the human soul.

I was reading something that came across my desk from the Institute for Transformational Therapy. A Dr. Paul Hanig(?) and this is what he wrote: "Counseling and therapy can be seen as a religious experience. Therapists are a new class of healers, those who perform ritual rites of passage very much like ministers, prophets, shamans, priests and rabbis, even like a Messiah. Psychotherapy has become the modern day vehicle for facilitating a right of passage to a new level of development, for a seeker of truth and authenticity."

Here is a man who claims for psychotherapy the capability of transforming people to a new level of truth, a new level of authenticity, a new level of development. He goes on to talk about a new level of consciousness. He says that we offer the essence of healing and transformation. We can be considered like ministers, prophets, shamans, priests, rabbis and even like a Messiah. He goes on to say, "In the light of this, insanity and neurosis can be a place for leaping into the spiritual unknown, not something to be suppressed or drugged. Psychotherapy can be the ultimate platform for going from the crazy unknown to the sublime mysterious known. Therapy deals with this mystery, the unknown and the transformation into freedom."

Well those are pretty grandiose claims for psychotherapy, aren't they? Take man to a new level, reveal truth to him, reveal authenticity to him, give him a higher level of consciousness, facilitate his spiritual journey, help him to know what heretofore is the spiritual unknown, take him to the point of sublime transformation into freedom. Amazing confidence in human psychotherapy.

But that is the egotism of man at work. We constantly hear that we can solve the deepest problems of the human heart. If not in some philosophy or psychotherapy, through education. Alfred Whitney Griswald, former president of Yale University, wrote, "The source of better ideas, the key to better life, is wisdom. The surest path to wisdom is a liberal education." The therapist will tell you the way to get to the higher levels of truth and spirituality is through therapy. The educators will tell you the way to get to the higher levels of truth and spiritual understanding is through education. And that is the illusion of fallen man...the illusion that man in his own wisdom can change the heart of another human being...the illusion that he can solve the deepest cry of the human soul...the illusion that he can bring truth and reality to light.

Solomon himself writing in that despairing tone in which we hear him in Ecclesiastes said in chapter 1 verse 16, "I said to myself, Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge." In other words, I've been exposed to all the imaginable human wisdom. "And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly, the opposite of it. I realize that this also is striving after wind because in much wisdom there is much grief and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain. Human wisdom doesn't solve the problem, it seems to make it worse." In chapter 2 he goes on musing about the despair of wisdom. In verse 23 he sums it up and says, "Man's life is painful and grievous, even at night his mind doesn't rest, the whole thing is vanity." In chapter 8 and verse 16 he says, "When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has been done on earth, and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover and though the wise man should say, I know, he can't discover. He may say he knows but he doesn't know." Why? "Because he cannot discover it. True wisdom is only from God revealed, not by man discovered."

Lawrence Tombs(?) kind of summed it up writing in the Old Testament theology and the wisdom literature journal, he said, quote: "Wisdom is to be found with God and no where else. And unless the quest for wisdom brings a man to his knees in awe and reverence, knowing his own helplessness to make himself wise, wisdom remains for him a closed book," end quote.

Now that is precisely Paul's point in our text. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. What Paul is saying here to the Corinthians and to us is that we do not look to human wisdom for the answer, to the needs of the human heart. Spiritual reality, spiritual transformation does not come from human wisdom. God is not known by human wisdom. God's truth is not perceived as to its spiritual aspects by human wisdom. There are some things, obviously, that can be known by observation. But the key to solving the issues of the heart of man is not available to man in human wisdom. That's his point.

In fact, in the text, chapter 2 verses 6 to 16, Paul makes two points, just two. Point number one, true wisdom is not humanly discovered. Point two, true wisdom is divinely revealed. That's his message, True wisdom is not humanly discovered. True wisdom is divinely revealed.

I was sent in the last few days a preface to a new reprint that's coming out by the publishers. It's a reprint of Richard Baxter. Richard Baxter was a Puritan who lived from 1615, died in 1691, so he's three centuries removed. He wrote a book that endeavored to take the wisdom of God out of the Bible and apply it to the souls of men. He called it "The Christian Directory." And it was intended...by the way, it's about a million and a quarter words, it's a huge mammoth thing. But in it all he expected to be able to help men see the wisdom of God as it applied to the issues of the soul. It is now being reprinted. The subtitle of it is this, "A sum of practical theology and cases of conscience directing Christians how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations and to escape or mortify every sin." That's some subtitle.

The whole million and a quarter word volume deals with the application of divine wisdom to every issue of the human heart. The foreword to this new edition is...has been written by J.I. Packer. And in the forward which I was asked to read, I found some very interesting insights that might kind of give you a little bit of a feeling for this issue of comparing human wisdom with the wisdom of God. Packer writes this, "It is possible to see clearly the difference between the How-to books that today's evangelicals write for each other and the How-to teaching of Baxter's Directory which is so much wiser and digs so much deeper. Our How-to's...how to have a wonderful family, great sex, financial success, in a Christian way, how to cope with life, life's passages, grief, crises, fears, frustrating relationships and what not else give us formula to be followed by a series of supposedly simple actions on our part and to be carried out in obedience to instructions in the manner of a person painting by the numbers." Then he says, "Had we remembered that what makes good works good, according to the Scriptures, is a right form fixed by law and wisdom allied to right desires, fixed by the gospel, we might have been spared the egocentric zany simplistic degenerate half-magical spell type of evangelicalism which is all that the world sees when it watches religious TV or looks directly at the professedly evangelical community."

To sum all that up, he simply says Baxter is deep and what we're getting today is zany. So he says, back to Baxter, "The sheer brilliance of his achievement in crystallizing a proper form for the life of faith on a canvas is brought as life at its very high level of intelligent Bible-based theologically integrated wisdom and with an unfailing compressed clarity is dazzling to the mind," end quote.

Now I simply point that out to you to let you know that there is a very great difference between human wisdom somehow sort of implied in the church and the true divine wisdom out of the Word of God. The church today has fallen prey to a lot of human wisdom being passed on as if it is divine wisdom, when in fact it is not divine wisdom. It is the wisdom of the world, sort of coated in Christian terminology. Paul says here, we have to ignore human wisdom when it comes to spiritual issues and go back to the wisdom of God.

And, you know, as we begin this new year, I told you a few weeks ago, I just want to reaffirm as we launch off into 1990 that we are committed to the sufficiency of the wisdom of God as revealed in the Word of God. That has been the heart of our ministry and will continue to be so. So I'm simply trying to remind you of the substance which we hold in our hands with regard to divine wisdom in the revealed Scripture.

Now, let's go to verse 6 and let me just remind you about point one which we have already made, true wisdom is not humanly discoverable. Paul writes, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away, but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory...the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood, for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but just as it is written, things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." His point there is men can't discern divine truth from their own efforts. The hidden wisdom of God, none of the rulers of this age has understood, verse 8. They don't understand it. They can't understand it. If they had understood it, they wouldn't have killed Christ. The eye doesn't see it, the ear doesn't hear it, the heart doesn't conceive it, so man on his own with his wisdom cannot discover the truth about God and therefore the truth about the deepest needs of man's soul alludes him. True wisdom is not humanly discoverable. That's what those verses are saying.

Now let's go on to the next part of the text which we haven't addressed. Point two, true wisdom is revealed by God. It is not discoverable to the human mind no matter how hard man tries and it is revealed by God. Starting in verse 10 and down through verse 16, we're going to go rapidly, so hold on and follow the thought. I want to give you three words, all right? If you jot these down, they'll pull you right through this text: revelation, inspiration and illumination...revelation, inspiration and illumination. These are the key words that unlocked this marvelous passage to me and will do so for you.

The first word is revelation, verse 10. "For to us," and by the way, "to us" is in the emphatic in the Greek, it comes first, "To us marvelously, amazingly, graciously, mercifully, God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." He says we can know...to us we can know because God has revealed it. It pleased Him to reveal true wisdom. The Bible contains all the wisdom that man needs for solving all the problems of his life, all the spiritual issues. All spiritual matters, all spiritual struggles, problems and issues find their solution in the Word of God. God has revealed to us through His Spirit these things. So we can, listen carefully to what I say, we can understand all the things we need to understand about spiritual life.

Now, this has some limits. We do not understand everything. Deuteronomy 29:29 says there are secret things that belong only to the Lord, His mind is unsearchable and His ways are past finding out, Romans 11 says. So when we say that we have a revelation of all we need to know, it doesn't

mean we have a revelation of all that could be known. Secondly, it doesn't mean we have no need of human teachers. Ephesians says He's given the church, apostles, prophets evangelists, teachers and pastors, or teaching pastors, for the perfecting of the saints. God has given us teachers who help us understand the full richness of what God has revealed. Thirdly, another point that must be made is that though we have the revelation of God, that revelation is revealed to us in Scripture and does not extend beyond God's Word...Thy word is truth, Jesus said. Thy word is truth and it is truth enough to sanctify Thy people, sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is true. It is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is the word to which nothing is to be added and nothing removed.

Furthermore, it does not mean that Bible study is not difficult or challenging or hard work, we must be diligent to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Furthermore, the fact that we have a revelation from God revealed to us does not mean there are no spiritual requirements for understanding it, there are. You want to lay aside sin, 1 Peter 2:1, and then desire the pure milk of the Word. Sin will be a barrier to your ability to receive the revelation of God.

So, verse 10 says God has revealed it to us through the Spirit. The only way to know divine wisdom, the only way to know the solutions to the needs of man's heart is through God revealing them, for we could never understand them. We could never know God's truth, we could never know God's mind, we could never know God's will anymore than two ants can understand what you're thinking about. Impossible, beyond our comprehension. And so there is revelation. God has revealed it to us, not all that could be known but enough. Does not mean we don't need human teachers, we do make that revelation clear to us. That revelation is contained within the Word and does not go beyond it. It demands diligent study and spiritual commitment. But the revelation has been given. So we have the revelation.

He says this, verse 10, "The Spirit can give us this revelation because the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." What a statement. The Holy Spirit is competent to reveal God's truth because the Holy Spirit alone searches the deep recesses of God's person.

The Holy Spirit as a member of the trinity is God. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God perfectly. There is nothing in God unknown to the Holy Spirit. There is nothing that God knows that the Spirit doesn't know. There is nothing that God knows that the Spirit has to somehow discover. He knows the inmost perfections and purposes of God. He is fully able to reveal, therefore, God and God's will. God is omniscient, He knows everything and the Holy Spirit is omniscient about God, that is He knows everything about God who knows everything. So, the Spirit is the perfect one then to reveal because He knows everything. Not a partial knowledge, not an incomplete knowledge but an absolutely perfect knowledge.

And he compares it, look in verse 11, to an analogy. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him. Even so, the thoughts of God knows no one except the Spirit of God." Now that's a very simple analogy. Nobody knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of that man. You can't know what I'm thinking, you might think you know, and you might get close by watching what I do, but you can't know what my thoughts are. You can't read my thoughts. That's outside your capability. You can hear my words and you can see my acts but you cannot know my thoughts. God has not given that sense to man. The only one who knows me is my own spirit. The only one who knows the thought of a man is the spirit of that man.

And so, he's simply saying that's the way it is with God. The only one who really knows God's thoughts is the Spirit of God. Now if you want to know what a man is thinking, that man's spirit will reveal it. If you want to know what God is thinking, God's Spirit will have to reveal it. Very simple analogy. There are feelings which only a man's inner self knows. The same is true of God. There are things in the mind of God that only the Spirit of God knows and the only way we would ever know them is if the Spirit of God revealed them. That is why it is so egotistical and so ludicrous for someone to sit in judgment on this book because what they're doing is saying the Holy Spirit doesn't know what God's thinking, I do, I'll tell you what is correct and what is not. Unbelievable, unimaginable egotism that man should think he could ascend to the thoughts of God apart from them being revealed by the Spirit of God. This then is revelation. Verses 10 and 11 talk about revelation.

Now revelation simply is the act by which God makes known what is otherwise unknowable. God makes known what is otherwise unknowable. And it is a free voluntary act of love and grace in which God discloses truth to us. He gives us truth. So the Holy Spirit then has brought us revelation.

Now let me take you to the second word. The second word is inspiration. It means to breathe in. Now what is this talking about? Well look at verse 12. "Now we have received," stop right there. The revelation was given and the revelation had to be received. So we received it. And it was not the spirit of the world, that is it wasn't a human revelation, but it was the Spirit who is from God so that we might know the things freely given to us by God. We received it.

How did we receive it? How did we receive this revelation from the Spirit of God? Well, first of all, let me talk about that word "we" for a moment. I think that's really an editorial "we" not a universal "we." And I think Paul here is talking about himself and the other writers of Scripture...the Apostles, those who wrote the Scripture. He says "we received it." Paul says on another occasion, "That which I received I pass on to you." And now we're into inspiration. The revelation came through a human instrument. God using them to write down His inspired Word. It was literally "God breathed but breathed through a human vessel." So Paul says we received it, not from some human source but from the Holy Spirit that we might know the things freely given to us by God. Then in verse 13 he says, "Which things we also speak, or communicate." We write it down, we proclaim it, "Not in words taught by human wisdom but in those words...implied...taught by the Spirit which pull together

spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. Now he's talking about inspiration. He's saying God had a revelation, He transmitted it through us by giving us the words which we spoke and wrote, that's inspiration...that's the second key word here.

We Scripture writers have been given Spirit revelation. Human reason couldn't discern any of this stuff. God has to reveal it. He reveals it and then He gives it to us to be received through words. Please notice that, "words taught by the Spirit." It's not concept inspiration. It's not general spiritual insight but specific verbal inspiration, words taught by the Spirit which contain spiritual thoughts in those spiritual words. And so the Apostle is saying the words that we wrote down are not our own choice, they're not the result of our own insights, our own ingenuity, our own human wisdom, our own reason, they were given us by the Holy Spirit. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired, God breathed." It is God speaking. That's why Jesus said, "Scripture cannot be broken, not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law, not anything is to be added or taken from these words." It is Scripture, it is the graphé of God, the writing of God, the words of the Spirit. Holy men were moved by the Spirit of God. And the prophecy did not come from private interpretation but God gave them every word. And that is why every word of God is pure, it is infallible, it is inerrant. Spiritual truths were set forth in Spirit-given words, that's inspiration. And what you hold in your hand then is the revelation in inspiration. The revelation is the content, the inspiration was the means by which it was written down.

So, the Spirit then is the only source of that. The only way we can know about God, the only way we can know about divine wisdom and thus the only way we can know about the deep needs of the soul of man in all of his needs is to go to the Word revealed and inspired. But there's a third term that must take our attention and that is the word illumination...illumination. For even an unregenerate person can pick up an inspired revelation. An unbeliever can pick this up. Notice, would you, in verse 14, "A natural man, an unregenerate, unconverted person, does not accept the things of the Spirit of God." They're literally in another dimension. The unregenerate person does not accept them, does not understand them. This is the man with the unchanged nature, the opposite of a spiritual man. He doesn't recognize the things of the Spirit, it's double talk to him. He can't understand it.

In fact, not only doesn't he accept it, it says, "For they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised or understood." He is a natural man. He is dependent only on earthly wisdom and maybe demonic wisdom, but not divine wisdom. And so as he looks at the Bible, he doesn't accept it. He doesn't accept the assessment of man as sinner on his way to hell. He doesn't accept the assessment of man as fallen. He doesn't accept the assessment of the fact that man by his own goodness can achieve nothing with God. He doesn't accept that. It's foolish to him that some one person could die for the sins of the world. He doesn't understand any of that, it goes right on by him because it cannot be known by human wisdom, even though it is read by human eyes. It's available but he can't receive it.

Now that's the dilemma of an unregenerate man. He may have a Bible. He may read a Bible. He will not understand the Bible because it is spiritually understood. In other words, it is understood by the power of the Holy Spirit working in man's spirit. It is spiritually appraised. It is spiritually evaluated. Man is psuchikos), the man who knows nothing beyond the physical, all his values are physical and material and he can't receive the true spiritual realities...like a blind man in an art gallery, he's like a deaf man at a concert. Luther said he's..."Man is like a pillar of salt, he's like Lot's wife, he's like a log and a stone, he's like a lifeless statue which uses neither eye nor mouth, neither sense nor heart unless he is enlightened, converted or regenerated by the Holy Spirit." Man does not know, cannot know.

But verse 15 says, "He who is spiritual, he who possesses the Spirit, appraises all things...he appraises all things." Hey, he's got it all, he understands it all. You say, "Does that mean that if you're a Christian and you possess the Holy Spirit that you can understand every single thing in the Bible perfectly just by reading it? No. No, there are some difficult portions but what it does mean is that you will understand the truth of God. You may not understand every text and every context, you may not understand every nuance, but you who have the Holy Spirit who are the children of God, when you read the Bible will find that it will convict your sin and it will bring joy to your heart over the provision of Christ and you will understand the message, the theme, the thrust of the Scripture. There are details for which diligent study is required and capable teachers are a blessing. But you will understand the truth. And when somebody shows you the things hard to understand and you finally understand them, they will grip you with spiritual reality because you are spiritually alive.

So, here's the natural man who doesn't have the Holy Spirit, so he doesn't have the truth so he can't make a true judgment. He has nothing to offer the church. Believe me, how can the church buy into human wisdom? But he who is spiritual, he who possesses the Spirit judges all things properly.

Then he says this at the end of verse 15 and in to verse 16, "Yet he himself is appraised by no man, for who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." That's a marvelous syllogism. Really a marvelous rich...kind of goes like this, syllogism, goes like this, "No one can instruct the Lord...we have the mind of the Lord therefore no one can instruct us," that's his thought. No one is going to instruct the Lord, who has known the mind of the Lord that he would instruct Him? We have the mind of Christ. Then back to verse 15, so nobody is going to instruct us, no human source has anything to tell us about spiritual truth. We're not judged by any man. And yet they sure try all the time. But we have the mind of Christ. Where? Revealed in the Word of God. We have the resident Holy Spirit to be our teacher.

So, revelation is that content which God disclosed to men which was previously unknown and unknowable. Inspiration is the process by which God disclosed it as He moved upon the writers to put it down, that is the words of the Holy Spirit conveying spiritual truth. And then in order to make it live in the hearts of people, He illuminates it by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. And,

beloved, in it are the answers to all spiritual needs. That's what Paul is saying. And what he's telling the Corinthians is, "Let go of human wisdom, you don't need it." He started into this thing clear back in chapter 1 verse 18. You don't need human wisdom, you need the Word of God. It is deep, it is rich and will not offer what J.I. Packer called "the zany how-to's of modern evangelicalism."

Let me sum up these three points by giving you a little outline you can remember. Because the Word of God is revealed, because it is revealed, it is revelation. That guarantees its authenticity...the word is authenticity. Because it is revealed from God, that guarantees its authenticity. Second, because it is inspired that guarantees its accuracy. Because it is illumined that guarantees it is applicable. It is authentic, it is accurate, it is applicable. As revelation, it's the authentic Word of God. As inspiration, it is the accurate Word of God. As illumination, it is the applicable Word of God. And it works in the believer to the exclusion of human wisdom. We don't need to buy into human wisdom to solve spiritual problems. We can have confidence in the Word of god. This is our touchstone.

Listen to Psalm 119:130. "The unfolding of Thy words gives light, it gives understanding to the simple." The Word gives understanding to the simple. All we need, beloved, for spiritual life is revealed in this Word and will be illuminated to the faithful believer by the author Himself, the Holy Spirit. We have an authentic Word, we have an accurate Word, we have an applicable Word that can touch us at every point of our need. And so whatever it is that we're dealing with in life, we go back to this book which is our source. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we are again refreshed to be reminded that the Word is so central for us. Good to begin a new year with a fresh cognizance of the centrality of Your holy Scripture. Thrilling to know that it is authentic, it is the real revelation, it is accurate to the very words, it is applicable, it does transform life in every spiritual dimension. Father, thank You for this treasure. We are not like many in this world who have not the Scripture in their language, we're not like others who have it but it is very scarce, not like some who have to write it down on a piece of paper and that's the only Scripture they have. We have it in abundance. How tragic that we have decided to replace it with human wisdom. Call us back to Your truth, to Your wisdom and may the deep things of the Spirit come into our understanding and may the Word dwell in us richly. We'll thank You in the Savior's dear name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).