

Sermon March 12 Wise living 3/12/23

Proverbs consistently contrasts the difference between the foolish and the wise. It doesn't take much debating to realize that we all would like to be counted on the wise side! However, God's grace gifts of wisdom, knowledge and discernment are different. Tony Evans explains it this way:

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away. But I don't like apples. They tell me apples are very nutritious. I just don't like them – except when I go to the Texas State Fair. At the fair I get candied apples. They take the apple, and they dip it in liquid sugar. Then, me and apples, we're all right. The problem is that the way apples have been prepared, the nutritional value has been destroyed, By mixing apples with the sugar, things are now kind of messed up. The apples will hurt me now, not help me.

When you mix human wisdom with divine wisdom, you cancel divine wisdom. All you have is human wisdom. That's what the Bible calls being double minded – being secular and sacred at the same time. (Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations, p. 83.)

Similarly, Evans gives a second analogy – this one about 3D glasses. (I think they are still used in movies and entertainment media.)

"At many amusement parks and museums, they have 3D movies. When you walk into the theater, you receive a pair of glasses. If you try to watch the movie without the glasses, you see a distorted picture. No matter how hard you strain and look and twist to try to make sense of what is happening on the screen, there is still a distortion because of the dimension through which you are looking. By handing you a pair of 3D glasses when you walk into the theater, they give you the tool you need to see the screen without distortion.

One of the problems many of us have is that we have a distorted view. We see what we see but we don't see all there is to be seen. We need to have a divine frame of reference in order to see what is really going on." Evans, p.303.

Now God knows how much appeal secular wisdom and the boasts of special knowledge has to many people. They accept fake news without question; they follow the advice of so-called experts who tell you how to lose weight, how to be the true you, how to find the match you have longed for in a marriage partner, how to win the lottery, when the end of the world is coming, etc. but it's all human based. Most of it is simply a sham, a hoax, a money-making scheme to benefit the deceivers. But that's secular wisdom, not coming from true revelations from God. It's not based in God's grace gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment of spirits. God would like us to be seen as wise people. So, these 3 of the gifts listed in I Cor. 12 are Gods gifts so there are people in the church who are wise, are discerning and have gifts of knowledge. When the rest of the church listens and follows their advice, the church is kept from going down the rabbit holes of secular wisdom. We can be a true lighthouse, warning of the dangers of false teaching and sensuous living and shedding light on people's journeys so they steer clear of these distortions and follow God's directives. **That's wise living.** 3 spiritual gifts explain focus today. **Let us pray.**

Three Grace Gifts in Real Life

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own insight; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths." Here's how the Passion Translation puts it:

Trust in the Lord completely, and do not rely on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you and he will lead you in every decision you make.. . Don't think for a moment that



Wisdom
First
Listens!
(James 3:1)

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you know it all, for wisdom comes when you adore him with undivided devotion and avoid everything that is wrong. Then you will find the healing refreshment your body and spirit long for. Prov.3:5-8

“Lean not on your own insight.” Jesus rebuked the Apostle Peter very sharply when Peter insisted on the rightness of his logic and not God’s.

Jesus had just told the disciples of his upcoming suffering, death and resurrection and Peter responded, “No, Lord (a contradiction in terms); this shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.” (Mt. 16:21-23). Secular wisdom.

So, let’s define those 3 grace gifts, and then I will tell stories that demonstrate these gifts in real life.

Wisdom: the divine gift to effectively apply spiritual truth to meet a need in a specific situation. It’s the ability to focus on unseen circumstances in determining the next steps to take and to provide the direction of God. Thus, wisdom first listens – to God! From there God’s perspective, understanding, and insight are brought to the church.

Knowledge – actually called revelation-knowledge. It is God’s gift to bring truth to the Body through revelation or biblical insight. It’s the ability to gain understanding that serves the church in practical ways. It has been defined by some as the Holy Spirit’s impartation through an impression, a vision or his voice that gives understanding of a person or situation that cannot be known through the natural mind of man (Passion footnote I Cor. 12: 8 , p. 467).

And thirdly, the grace gift of discernment of spirits. The word used is “Diadrino”- which describes God’s ability to discern what is of the Holy Spirit and what is not, to distinguish between truth and error before the difference is manifest to all by its results. Charles Spurgeon said, “Discernment is not a matter of telling the difference between right and wrong. (Although there is no question this initial distinction is critically involved). Rather, it is telling the difference between right and almost right. It is the God-given ability to discern between those who are real gold and those who are gold-plated. It is knowing who is speaking truth or what spirit is embodied or actively present through a person.

So let’s look at what these gifts look like in real time.

In the book of Acts author Luke chronicles when the Apostle James manifested wisdom. This is Acts 15 at a time when the early church was about to split over Paul’s inclusion of the Gentiles in the ministry of evangelism. The Jewish Christian believers wanted all new converts to be circumcised and marked by obedience to all the Jewish laws. But James heard Peter, Barnabas and Paul’s testimonies, acknowledging the working of God among the Gentiles and concluded that “we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead” ...James gave specific guidelines of the simple gospel boundaries for them. His wisdom was accepted by all the ruling elders in the council, a letter containing these guidelines was written to all the Gentile churches and the ministry among the Gentiles continued to thrive.



All because of James' wise advice in a serious conflict situation.

In a gift of knowledge, there's story, I believe, in Catherine Marshall's book *The Helper*. A Christian woman who was accustomed to listening to the directives of the Holy Spirit was praying about a friend about to embark on a plane trip with her children to another city in the States. In prayer the Lord told the praying woman that the plane her friend was booked on was about to be destroyed, killing all the passengers. This was knowledge by revelation. So she immediately texted her friend, who had already boarded and said "Get off your plane with your children immediately. Don't take this flight. It will be destroyed in the air." Her friend on the plane recognized the Lord's warning through her friend, and immediately got off that plane with her children. That plane did crash and all the occupants were killed. By recognizing the confirmed grace gift of words of revelation knowledge given by her friend, her own life and the life of her children were spared. Or this story from the prayer ministry recorded in *What Happens when Women Pray* by Evelyn Christenson. (p.10-11). She had been teaching a weekly neighborhood Bible study to 8 women "but nothing was happening." So they decided to zero in in prayer for Marion, one of the women in the group who was not a Christian. After their group time of prayer one Tuesday morning Evelyn told her praying friends, "I am taking Marion to lunch." As the group was departing after prayer, one woman said, "I'm going to pray that you take her to a place where you can talk." Marion decided they would have lunch in an exclusive country club which Marion's husband co-owned, Evelyn groaned in her spirit, 'a country club, really Lord? How can we talk in this atmosphere?' But they were escorted in the restaurant to a very secluded table in a corner which made personal conversation easy. Evelyn and Marion talked most of the afternoon as Marion asked question after question about Jesus. Then "at 3:20 Marion jumped up from her chair, they went out to the parking lot, sat in Marion's car and Marion prayed to invite Christ into her life.

But that's only part of the story. The next day when a friend named Mary came to Evelyn's house to clean, her first question was "What happened on Tuesday? . . . The Lord said on Sunday, "Now Mary, I want you to fast and pray,' so I didn't eat. I just prayed from Sunday till Tuesday afternoon. Then in the middle of the afternoon Tuesday the Lord said to me, " It's Ok, Mary, you can eat now.' What happened on Tuesday afternoon?" Evelyn replied, "Mary would you believe that at 3:20 Tuesday afternoon, Marion accepted Christ?" The two women hugged and wept for joy together because they had prayed for Marion for the past several months. The point of this story, however, is that Mary heard a directive about the Lord to pray and fast and continued in obedience to that call for 2 days until the Lord told Mary she could eat at midafternoon Tuesday. That's Revelation knowledge. It's real because we have a communicating God. He just asks us to listen and obey His directives.

Thinking of this definition of revelation-knowledge, I believe this is what happened to me last week in a dream I had. It was a dream about when Keith died. In the dream I was at his bedside as he was unconscious but taking his last breaths. I heard him call my name and then he was gone. But when I looked up, suddenly a field appeared behind the bed (where Keith lay) and at the end of the field was a low-lying hill. It was lined with people at the top. I felt like they were watching us and could hear us. And I "knew" they were all people from heaven. They were actual figures – not ethereal ghosts. I couldn't see their faces, but I "knew" they had come at the end of his life to welcome him into heaven. It was an example of revelation-knowledge. I believe that vision is actually biblical, based on Heb. 12:2 that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, but I knew also the vision was God's special revelation and encouragement to me – seeing this crowd of believers waiting to welcome Keith

into heaven. (In response to this sermon, in a little minute! :)) we will sing celebrating the saints in heaven: For All the Saints).

Finally, we see the gift of discernment in the biblical account of the Apostle Peter's recognition of the role of Satan in Ananias' life. That's the grace-gift Peter used in calling out Ananias' sin. When Ananias and Sapphira sold some property but then lied to the church about how much they had given to the church, Peter confronted Ananias first: "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept some of the money you received for the land? . . . What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:3-4). Sapphira later maintained that deception and both people were immediately struck dead by God. It was a very sober warning to the early church, and reveals the seriousness of why these gifts are given to believers.

You see, one of the names Jesus uses to identify Satan is a liar. Satan invented lies. He [Satan] has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for "he is a liar and the father of lies," John 8:44. We can be deceived easily, beloved, so the three grace gifts we are describing today are critical in maintaining a healthy church faithful to the Lord. Satan is defeated and as we go forward as a church, we go forward in Christ's victory as we manifest God's wisdom, knowledge, and discernment of spirits.

It's a Biblical principle that when we recognize and use our gifts under Christ's Lordship (i.e, using them when and how the Spirit directs), we will see our God do amazing things and it will affect our prayers, our giving, our priorities, in fact, everything we do. So, the rest of the service is a response to these truths about our Lord. Let's pray and then we will sing for all the saints like those I saw in the dream of Keith's entrance to Heaven!! And go forward with our sharing, our praying, our giving, and our singing with God's wisdom! Amen.

Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson 3 12 23 Pastor Ogden Dunes
Community Church

Satan Invented Lies

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