

The Voice of Wisdom

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung"—Phil. 3:7-8

PROVERBS CHAPTER TWO

SURROUNDING the table of the Lord, in weekly memorial of his great manifestation of love, we stand related to wonderful facts : facts we do well to consider every day, yea, every hour—not just once a week. In fact, perhaps our principal prayer and principal effort should be for REMEMBRANCE. When we drift into forgetfulness, when we allow our minds to be absorbed and carried away with other things, we cannot possibly be pleasing God or walking in the Way of Life.

We say "wonderful facts," for they comprise the glorious Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things concerning the Name of the Lord Jesus.

During the past week, as it truly is every week, we have had excellent nourishment for the mind that delights to dwell on the things of the Spirit. They have given us strength and encouragement to follow the Master's footsteps—along the bitter path of obedience to the glorious consummation of the divine nature.

This morning, Wisdom calls to us from the book of Proverbs—

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding;

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures—

"THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:1-6).

If this tells us anything at all, it certainly is trying to impress our dull fleshly minds with the tremendous effort and application that God expects us to be ANXIOUS to put forth in seeking spiritual knowledge. Do we make that effort? Is this the biggest thing in our hearts and lives? And if it is not, WHY is it not? Let us be honest with ourselves, for these are matters of life and death—eternal life or eternal death.

Sometimes when we read from Eureka, we marvel at the spiritual wisdom and comprehension of the man who wrote it, so different from the thin fare from many sources today. But do we ever stop to consider HOW the writer came by his understanding? The wisdom of God does not come to a man in a natural way. He is not born with it, nor does it grow upon him in the natural process of maturing. The secret is here, in the words we have just read from Proverbs. It must be like the treasure hid in the field, or the pearl of great price—for which a man eagerly sells all that he has to purchase it.

To fully appreciate Elpis Israel and Eureka, a brother or sister should read the Life of Dr. John Thomas. It would be well if all new brethren and sisters were given a copy of this work, and were strongly exhorted to read it.

The Bible is a book of deep and endless wisdom. And if we would understand the fear of the Lord, and righteousness, and judgment, and every good path, then we too must search diligently and perseveringly for wisdom as for hidden treasures.

Happily, for our generation in these last days, our brother John Thomas has led the way, giving his life to this labor, and if we long to know the Truth in its depth and fulness, and the glorious things of the purposes of God, we must read with thanksgiving the results of his indefatigable searchings.

When discussing a certain subject with a well-known brother, I used bro. Thomas to support my understanding of the subject. He replied, "I do not believe everything John Thomas wrote, for he was not inspired." My answer was, "Neither are his critics inspired."

Truly brethren Thomas and Roberts were not inspired, but one thing is certain, and we discover what that is if we read their works carefully. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that these two brethren were intellectual giants in the matter of Bible exposition.

Picking up at the point where we spoke of the Gospel of the Kingdom as being wonderful facts, we are reminded of the words of Jesus in his parable in Matt. 13:44—

"The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for JOY thereof goeth and selleth ALL THAT HE HATH, and buyeth that field."

Paul expresses a similar thought with respect to himself—

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

"Yea doubtless, and I count ALL things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"

(Phil. 3:7-8).

One might say, That is all very well to talk like that, but DID he actually suffer the loss of ALL things? To get the answer to that question, all we have to do is read the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke, and we will find that what Paul said is unquestionably true. And give deep thought to such passages in his epistles as 1 Cor. 4:9- 13; 2 Cor. 4:8-11; 11:23-27. These things add up to a catalog of almost incredible sufferings and deprivations. This was the price Paul was HAPPY to pay for the glories of the love of Christ, accounting it all:

"Light affliction which is but for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17)

Let us come back to Prov. 2:4-5, and read these verses—

"IF thou seekest her (Wisdom) as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

What is "fear of the Lord" ? In Prov. 1:7 Solomon says—

"The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

There is NO knowledge outside of the "fear of the Lord." All true knowledge BEGINS at this point. Anything short of this, however clever or "learned," is ignorance and folly—which is the category all the ungodly world's "wisdom" falls in by divine estimation.

Another man approved by God is Job, who quotes God as saying—

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, THAT is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28).

David likewise speaks of it in Psalm 111:10—

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

Obedience and 'good understanding' are inseparable. They move forward together, and mutually strengthen and develop each other.

Among the many things written in the Old Testament for our instruction, there is one in Deut. 4:5-8. It is rather long, but well worth our reading together at this time—

"Behold, I (Moses) have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

"Keep therefore and do them, for this is your WISDOM and your UNDERSTANDING in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say,

"Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

"For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?"

"And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"

We are constantly impressed with the great superiority in wisdom and beauty of the Law God gave Israel through Moses over man's present ever-changing hodge podge of laws and regulations. Then Moses comes to the lesson that concerns us. The necessity of having our weak, forgetful, mortal minds stirred up day after day, and week after week, is shown in v. 9—

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou FORGET the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life:

"But teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons."

The result of seeking after wisdom is shown in Prov. 2:10-11—

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

For a few moments, let us look at the related subject of faith, for our knowledge of the fear of the Lord must be coupled with faith. In Heb. 11:6 the apostle makes an important statement when he says—

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God); for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek Him."

But this faith must be qualified; that is, a faith that will please God must be based upon things which He has promised, and not on some human invention. It must be based on Truth, and Facts. We look around and see many "faithful" people, but their faith is based upon human speculation and human emotions. We find the Spiritist, the Theosophist, the Buddhist, and all the differing churches and sects that go to make up Christendom.

The religious state of the world fills one with profound sorrow as we see millions of people without any sound faith, and thousands who will not listen to the real Truth. But we have gone to the only source of true wisdom, and have gotten understanding which has produced a faith that is based upon the promises of God in His Word of Truth, and this is the only faith that will stand the test.

The substance of our faith is summed up in the "Things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ." Of these things, Paul told the Corinthian brethren that they would be saved "if they kept in memory" what he had preached unto them. Therefore salvation depends upon a good memory of the right things. Now a good memory is largely a matter of interest and affection. We remember what we are interested in. We remember what we love.

Remembrance was one of the outstanding features of the Mosaic constitution. How often we read—

"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy";

"Remember thou wast a servant in Egypt";

"Remember what the Lord did to Pharaoh";

"Remember the days of old"; and finally—

"REMEMBER HIS HOLY COVENANT."

In our case we have the command that brings us to the table of the Lord each first day of the week—

"Do this in remembrance of me."

In the mercy of God, we have been granted the opportunity of thus keeping Christ's love in constant memory, by partaking of the emblems we see upon the table—truly a remarkable provision.

We have reached this point through our belief and obedience of the Gospel. And now we are patiently waiting for those things which we believe in and hope for. Our faith and hope are based upon the great and precious promises of a faithful heavenly Father. In Heb. 6:18 the apostle says—

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Realizing our exalted position and high calling, let us give heed to Paul where he says we are to (1 Thess. 2:12)—

"Walk worthy of God Who hath called us unto His Kingdom and glory."

In Heb 6:1 Paul says—

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection."

These principles are the foundation. We are not being told to leave them behind, but to leave them as such, as the foundation, and not tamper with them, but to go on and build upon them. Our faith and hope are built upon the Rock foundation of Christ and of the truth in him. What we have to look after is our building thereupon.

A building, subject to the effects of the elements, needs sound construction and constant care; and so it is with the building founded upon the first principles of the Truth of God. The writings of the apostles are filled with continued supplications, pleadings, and exhortations that we build our building soundly by "walking worthy of God." Of himself, Paul said (Phil. 3:13)—

"This one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13).

It is not for us to decide what walk will be acceptable to God, for Jeremiah says (10:23)—

"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

And therefore the prophet pleads (v. 24)—

"O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."

We need be at no loss to know what to do, for we are perfectly safe in giving heed to the voice of Wisdom. Although we all have notions as to what we think is right, and how we ought to talk and walk, Wisdom also has a set of notions on these subjects, and they are far different from ours.

It is a strange quirk and figment of the human mind that it can, by its own innate "reason," discern right from wrong, and wisdom from folly. For millenniums, men have misruled the world, and abused each other, under the delusion that they have some inner wisdom. Man's thoughts—our own natural thoughts—are expressions of the warped and sin-tending carnal mind; but Wisdom's thoughts are the expressions of the Spirit.

Therefore, if we follow Wisdom, the divine Word, revealed for us in God's infallible and inspired Scriptures, we will find the knowledge of God, and will understand righteousness, judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. Paul reminds us in Rom. 8:14—

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, THEY are the sons of God."

And the consistent testimony of Scripture is that ONLY such are the sons of God (Prov. 28:26)—

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

Therefore let us give heed to the voice of Wisdom—

"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scornings? and fools hate knowledge?"

"Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you"

(Prov. 1:20-23).

"When Wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, then discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Prov. 2:10-11).

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and LEAN NOT UNTO THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

In addition to the voice of Wisdom in Proverbs, we find it all through the Scriptures of Truth. There is one reference in Isaiah that it is well for us to remember—

"Saith the Lord: To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word" (66:2).

The word "man" means a person, and is not restricted just to men. The word "trembleth" means to be exercised about, to be concerned about, to do something about—not just a disturbed emotional reaction. Along this same vein there is a beautiful saying of the Lord Jesus: well-known, but ever-fresh; often quoted, but insufficiently practiced—

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Our concluding thought comes to us from our readings for yesterday (Prov. 1:5), and gives us the 'conclusion of the matter'—

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning: a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

G. Gibson
