

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WISDOM OF GOD

"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Ps. 104:24). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

The foundation of true religion is to have proper thoughts of God. Of the wicked it is said that God is not in all his thoughts: "*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*" (Ps. 10:4). Malachi tells of a remnant that think upon His name: "*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name*" (Mal. 3:16). The man who thinks right about God will not be far wrong in his thinking about other things. A thousand evils grow out of wrong conceptions about God.

Wisdom belongs to God as an intelligent Spirit. It is a more comprehensive attribute than knowledge; it not only supposes knowledge, but directs and uses it in the best manner. There are men who know much, so much that they may be regarded as walking encyclopedias, but they have little wisdom; they do not know how to use their knowledge. This is what is meant when a man is referred to as a man of book learning, but without common sense. He knows a lot, but he is without wisdom. But God is both all knowing and all wise. "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).

Wisdom is a Personal Perfection in God.

An unwise being cannot be the true God. Even Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, said: "No man is wise, but God only." And Job declares, "*With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding*" (Job 12:13). "*Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding*" (Dan. 2:20,21). He is three times called the only wise God: "*To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen*" (Rom. 16:27); "*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen*" (1 Tim. 1:17); "*To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*" (Jude 25). The angels when compared with Him are charged with folly:

"Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly" (Job 4:18). His wisdom is unsearchable: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33).

Wisdom Appears in the Decrees of God

God's purposes and decrees are called His counsels. *"O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. 25:1). Resolutions and determinations of men are the wisest which are formed after mature deliberation and consultation. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14). But God's counsels are without consultation, and His determinations are without deliberation. Being naturally and infinitely wise, He requires no time to deliberate; nor does He need some one with whom to counsel. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor" (Rom. 11:34); "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16).*

God's counsels are immutable. There is no change necessary, for they were formed in wisdom. *"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). God can declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things to pass, and nothing can overthrow His counsel or thwart His will. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 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" (Heb. 6:17,18).*

The Wisdom of God is Manifested in Creation

"In wisdom hast thou made them all" (Ps. 104:24). We look into the starry heavens and there see a marvelous display of wisdom. Man, after centuries of gazing into the heavens with the naked eye, and after decades of poking at the stars with the telescope, is still a mere tyro in the subjects of astronomy and astrology. We look into the airy region, from whence comes rain and snow, which God wisely distributes on the earth. We look upon the earth and everywhere we see design that testifies to the wisdom of God: "cattle upon a thousand hills;" pastures covered with flocks; valleys clothed with grass for beasts and herbs for men. We look into the bowels of the earth, and we see coal here, oil there, gold yonder, all wisely distributed for the use of men. Truly all His works praise

Him!

The Wisdom of God is Seen in Providence

There are returning seasons: seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, night and day, all of which evidences supernatural wisdom. This world is not run by capricious chance, in or by cold fate, nor by natural law; it is run by its Maker. *"It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in"* (Isa. 40:22) and wisely orders all things for His own glory. *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"* (Rom. 11:36). Providence may be defined as God's superintendence of His creation. It is God at work bringing to pass what He eternally purposed should come to pass. Purpose is the **determination** of His will; prophecy is the **declaration** of His will; and providence is the **execution** of His will.

Providence is mysterious because it is the expression of infinite wisdom. A finite being cannot understand the ways of an infinite God. *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out"* (Rom. 11:33).

The Wisdom of God is Displayed in the Work of Human Redemption

Paul says that in our redemption by Christ, *"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (Eph 1:8). It was in wisdom that "Grace first contrived the way to save rebellious man." Salvation was not planned by human wisdom. And when planned by God and plainly revealed by Him in His word, it is foolishness to the natural man. *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14). The wisdom of God is seen:

(1) In the discovery of the person to be our Redeemer. Here stands a sinner, just any sinner! He has violated the law of God; he has rebelled against the Divine government; he has tried to dethrone the Judge of all the earth. What is to be done with this sinner? Justice says, Cut him down; he deserves to die. Truth says, He or I must perish, for I have declared that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). Holiness says, I hate the workers of iniquity. Mercy, in soft and plaintive tones, cries, Spare him! What? is there to be a conflict among the Divine attributes? Yes! unless Wisdom had come, leading One like unto the Son of Man saying, *"Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom"* (Job 33:24). When man was wallowing in his own blood, it was Wisdom that said, *"Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy*

one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Ps. 89:19). Who but God, infinite in wisdom, could have discovered such a fit Redeemer as we have in Christ Jesus? Our Redeemer was not a sinful man, nor a holy angel, but the Son of God, who is every way qualified to save us. And the discovery of such a person must be ascribed solely to the wisdom of God. Had all men been called together, and told that God was willing that they should be redeemed, if they could find a proper person for this gigantic task; and had all the holy angels been called into consultation upon the matter; they would never have been able to propose one fit for such a tremendous task. Ponder these thoughtful words of Jonathan Edwards:

"Who would have thought of a trinity of persons in the Godhead; and that one should sustain the rights of the Godhead; and another should be the Mediator; and another should make the application of redemption? Who would have thought of a way for answering the law, the law that threatened eternal death, without the sinner suffering eternal death? And who would have thought of any such thing as a Divine Person suffering the wrath of God? And if they had who would have contrived a way how he should suffer, since the Divine nature cannot suffer?"

(2) The wisdom of God appears in the persons fixed upon to be redeemed. Redemption is not universal. There is no redemption for the Devil and his angels. If redemption were universal, then salvation would likewise be universal. Rev. 5:9 is explicit and conclusive as to the truth of particular redemption, even among fallen men: *"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."* Christ redeemed particular persons. We cannot understand why one was selected rather than another, for all were by nature children of wrath, and of the same common clay. *"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3); "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:21). Distinguishing grace is a profound mystery, but it is a Scriptural doctrine. Our Savior memorialized the wisdom of God in distinguishing grace, when He said, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. 11:25-26).*

(3) The wisdom of God may be seen in the time of man's redemption. The Redeemer came

in the fullness of time, the time agreed upon between the Father and the Son. Four thousand years of human history fully revealed the need of a redeemer. It is an inexorable truth "*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Heb. 9:22). And all the blood on Jewish altars had been to no avail, "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*" (Heb. 10:4). It was not because of the value of animal sacrifices, but "*through the forbearance of God,*" that sins of Old Testament saints were remitted: "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*" (Rom. 3:25). The blood of beasts only typified and adumbrated the blood of God's Lamb, the only blood that could be the righteous basis for redemption.

When the Gentile world was covered with darkness, superstition, ignorance, and wickedness of all kinds when immorality, formality, hypocrisy, and contempt for the word of God among the Jews prevailed then Christ said "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*" (James 1:5).