

Bible Reading

by W.J. Erdman

The sermon explores the inadequacy of human wisdom in addressing the question of salvation, emphasizing the necessity of Christ and the Gospel message.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 12:13, John 3:7, Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 1 Corinthians 1:30

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Godly Wisdom"

Description

W.J. Erdman preaches on the contrast between the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God, focusing on the theme of salvation. He delves into the failure of human wisdom throughout history to provide answers to the crucial question of how a person can be saved. Through various biblical references, he emphasizes that true wisdom and salvation come through Christ Jesus, who offers righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to those who believe in Him. Erdman urges listeners to recognize their helplessness before God and to turn to Jesus for true liberation and salvation.

Transcript

My friends, this will be only, in part, a Bible Reading. Let us turn to 1 Corinthians i. Each letter of the New Testament was written for a special purpose; when Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, he wrote to those who had more knowledge than love. We see one word, the word WISDOM, used very frequently.

Let us try and consider its import this evening. The WISDOM of man and the WISDOM of God, concerning the one great question of salvation; and that question is one which God had in some degree given to the Gentiles to answer.

The ancients failed to solve this problem, and since then human wisdom has failed to add one ray of light on the subject. The wise men of the world can give no better answers than those of the old Greeks and Romans; they have nothing new to say.

Turn to the twenty-first verse of the first chapter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "For after that in the WISDOM of Gou, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Now we must understand the words; "foolishness of preaching" does not refer to the act of preaching, but to the thing preached; this is, as we are told, THE GOSPEL; the Gospel of the crucified Saviour. This is the WISDOM OF GOD which is preached. In reference to this, note two facts.

1st. They did not know God in regard to this great question of salvation; they did not know how good God was; they were left to themselves and failed to know Him. God thought it best to let them for centuries try to solve this great question, How can a man be saved?

2nd. After these nations had been permitted to answer this question, and utterly failed, then our God, whom they could not find out, came to men with His wisdom Jesus Christ and Him crucified, But it was foolishness to the Greek, and a stumbling block to the Jew.

The question is answered by God in the thirtieth verse, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us WISDOM and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

Who is made God's wisdom? Christ Jesus; for He is made unto us WISDOM in regard to salvation; that is full Salvation; even righteousness which corresponds to the removal of the guilt of sin, sanctification which corresponds to the removal of the power of sin; redemption which corresponds to the removal of the presence of sin; deliverance from the guilt and danger of sin; deliverance from the power of a sinful nature and habits; deliverance from the Presence of sin, from the world, the flesh, the devil, from an encompassing groaning creation, from this old body; the body of our humiliation.

Is there any one here to-night who is opposed to this plan of salvation; who thinks he has an answer for his reason? then let him come fairly down to this chapter, and look at it in its full signification. The wisest people were the Greeks, they developed the finest intellect, elaborated the noblest and fairest thought, and to this day the highest philosophy is found in the old Greek authors; all the arts and all the great sciences are still indebted to them. The answer of the wisest Greek to the question, How can a man be just before God; how can he be free from the evils and miseries of human life was substantially this: "We must wait until a Teacher comes from heaven to tell us what things we ought to do; both towards the gods and towards each other," He had tried to solve this deep problem, and left this as his confession. And where does the confession bring us? To a confession of our helplessness before God.

I turn to the Old Book, the Book of Ecclesiastes. It is the Book of the vanity of all things under the sun. Here you have a mirror of the natural man. And what is the question he sets before us, "What is the best thing under the sun?" And this wise king tried every experience that was possible, while in the pursuit of this answer. He tried pleasure, riches, learning, studied the arts and sciences; he even went to funerals, to find out what was the good thing under the sun. He said a great many good things, and a great many strange things. He clothes all nature in the sackcloth of his own melancholy; and to what conclusion does he come? You have read it again and again. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and Keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Where does this book bring man? UNDER LAW, AND EXPECTING JUDGMENT. Ministers of the Gospel desire earnestly to get you, who are not yet in the Lord Jesus Christ, to come to that very conclusion.

The Book of the vanity of all things "under the sun" brings a man right to where he knows he is a FAILURE. For who has kept the commandments? Who can meet judgment with his obedience? Now what was Ecclesiastes written for, if not to prove the failure of the Hebrew natural man and his wisdom, and so to hold the mirror up to all men? When a man is convinced of the truth of all that book; bring him face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with one step you enter into liberty and salvation.

"How can a man be just before God?" The Greek philosophers tried to answer that problem, philosophically, politically, and morally, and failed; the wise king confirms such human failure in his conclusion of the whole matter.

Look at the third chapter of John, and you will find a Jew also trying to solve this question. Read the latter part of the second and the beginning of the third chapters, and see what answer Jesus gave to him. Jesus knew all men, and he knew that Nicodemus was saying to himself, I am a Rabbi; I am a Jew; I have Abraham's blood. Now the Greek confession was, they must wait for a Teacher from God. And what did Nicodemus say unto Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus evidently thought he needed to know something more to perfect his morality, and then he would be all right; but the answer of our Lord came to him as if an all-engulphing earthquake had cleft the ground beneath his feet. The answer left him without a shred of morality; not even a little bit of the old Nicodemus left to help him into the kingdom. "He must be born again." A Rabbi, a Patriot, a Moralist, an Israelite; but all this you see was of no avail. We see even a Jew, a natural man with the best advantages, could not answer the question satisfactorily.

Turn to the old Roman world. One day two noble Romans were in a questioning mood. One said to the other, "Why is it that when we try to do the thing that is good something draws us towards the thing that is evil?" Their hearts were truthful, but dark, and they knew not where to find the answer to that question. Thank God we have the answer in this Book, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall have righteousness, that has to do with our JUSTIFICATION before God, and removes from us, through Jesus Christ, the guilt of sin; SANCTIFICATION, that has to do with our REGENERATION, and with the development of the new man, who is born of God, with the dominion over sin; REDEMPTION, and that has to do with the full and final salvation from the presence of sin and with perfected spirit, soul and body.

We should never, when talking with an unbelieving, sceptical, insincere man, allow him to quote a passage out of the Bible in his behalf. The only thing to do with him, is to ask him as a modern Jew, or a modern Greek, or modern Roman, for his answer, aside from all the Bible; and to-day, as years ago, such men are silent and dumb, or can only repeat the former failures. A certain learned Doctor, when confessing Christ for the first time, in speaking of his former life and studies, said, "My friends, I have read all the infidel books for the last forty years, the best books that human learning could produce, and they have landed me on the GRAVE with no beyond."

A Hindoo King who lived a long life, and had waged many wars, and gathered together the spoils of many libraries, commanded his librarian to condense the wisdom of the whole library into a few volumes. The librarian disappeared, and after three years laid before him three large folios. The old King said, "These are too large for me to read. I am too old now, condense them into still smaller compass." The librarian again disappeared, and ere long returned with one thin folio. Then said the old Hindoo, "Does this contain the whole of my library? I am much older now than when you first came into my presence, can you not tell me in a few words the sum of all this wisdom?"

The librarian with golden stylus wrote on a palm leaf, "The ail of man; he is BORN, he SUFFERS, he DIES. The all of man's knowledge: Perhaps!"

Yes, my friends, many scientific men to-day conjugate with an "IF;" a "perhaps." Napoleon knew better. He spoke some wonderful words on this question of salvation. One day, when in the height of his power, one of his officers came to him, and said, "Were it not well, Sire, now to organize and establish a universal religion?" "Would you have me crucified," instantly replied Napoleon. He knew, intellectually at least, that Jesus Christ crucified was the attractive power that drew all men unto Him. I pray it may be so to night.

From all this, it is evident God expects the Gospel to be preached without making any allowance for the civilization and culture of the present day of eighteen centuries. He expects to have the Gospel preached as if the day of Pentecost had just come, and because the case is closed and the conclusion reached; **MAN IS A FAILURE AND MAN'S WISDOM IS FOOLISHNESS.** He is of himself unable to answer the question of question; before it all the oracles are dumb. Try then no longer your own experience; come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has declared you shall be saved. You may try to find other answers, but it will only be a repetition of the folly and wisdom of these old Greeks and Romans. God now beseeches you to be reconciled to Him; His words in 2 Corinthians v. 20, give me the firm conviction that I am standing here in the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." In reality, every minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he is preaching the Gospel of Christ, is standing in the place of the Lord Jesus. You don't reject me, my friend, to-night, remember! You are rejecting Christ Himself.

Therefore, God in His wonderful love is beseeching men to be reconciled to Him through His beloved Son. Turn also to the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and the thirtieth verse, and hear Paul preaching on Mar's Hill. Hear what he says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

The word winked at may be read overlooked, but God will not overlook it now; for He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent. because he hath appointed a day in the which He shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; and therefore He commands all men to repent, «und believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved

Sincere as sinners are they have no wisdom to save themselves. May God grant that souls may come to night just as they are, looking unto Him, whom God has set before us, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that they may be free from guilt of sin, from the power of sin, and at last from the presence of sin.

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