



Title: Spiritually-Wise Christians
Theme: Grasping the Wisdom of God

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)

A trusting relationship is what enables the child of God to walk in the wisdom of God

Bible teacher and preacher Leslie Miller told of a time when he was in North Africa. One late afternoon he watched thousands of sheep come to a watering hole and drink until satisfied. After the sheep had all they could drink, a dozen shepherds walked off in different directions, singing or speaking in different tones and ways. To the amazement of Mr. Miller the sheep broke off from the large group and began to follow each shepherd. The sheep actually rallied to the call of the shepherd they knew and trusted. Pastor Leslie never forgot the sight and he thinks of it often when he reads or meditates on the words of Jesus “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27)

It is important to note. A trusting relationship is what enables the child of God to walk in the wisdom of God. A true love relationship is at the heart of true obedience to God and Christ.

I would propose to you that Christianity is not made up of just the things we do or not do. It must be clear in our hearts and minds that Christianity is a relationship with God, Jesus and fellowship in the Holy Ghost. Grasping for the wisdom of God involves being attentive to Jesus’ voice, meditating on what He says, obeying His words that give life and enduring in His calling upon our lives.

Just how does a child of God become a “Spiritually Wise Christian?”

Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.

Spiritually Wise Christianity knows that this life down here is a battle and there is a constant battle going on within our spiritual hearts all the time.

The apostle Paul writes about this battle that so wars against the Holy Spirit and is constantly urging us to give in to its power. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

A "Spiritually Wise Christian" knows that there is a battle for the child of God's heart, mind, and soul. There is that enemy the New American Standard Bible calls "...the flesh [which] sets its desire against the [Holy] Spirit." (Galatians 5:17) The King James hits the source right upon the head when it translated this verse as, "For the flesh lusteth against the [Holy] Spirit."

The key word that the wise Christian focuses on in this particular passage of Scripture is "lusteth" (*epithumeo*) meaning to have a yearning passion for. The practical application is that it has a pulling affect that grabs you and won't let go. This causes the child of God or lost sinner to desire, to want, to crave, to hunger, to thirst, to grasp and actually take a hold of that which destroys or inhibits a healthy relationship with Christ.

The Christian still has to battle that old nature of the flesh and he won't be rid of it in this lifetime. John reminds us that, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8) The apostle Paul himself experienced this turmoil and any honest Christian will tell you that this conflict goes on daily, therefore, it is only wise to admit it, watch for it and learn the only way of mastering it.

The words that the Lord spoke to Cain are set in the back of the mind of the child of God who wants to walk in the wisdom of God, "sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." (Genesis 4:7b)

There is an old hymn written by Robert Robinson, entitled "Come Thou Fount." In that wonderful Hymn of proclamation is a plea, "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing..." In that Hymn is also recognition of every Christian's battle, "Prone to Wonder, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love." Dr. Joseph S. Exel, writes about this conflict within man, "The battle of life are not mainly a fighting against adverse circumstances and external evils of this world. One of man's greatest foes is what is in his own heart. There is a great conflict internally. Thus, life is warfare and the Christian a soldier who must surrender to the will of his Commanding Officer..."

Dr. Murray uses a teaching on rattlesnakes to illustrate the deadly fascination of the flesh, the sinful nature of man. Mr. Murray's study on rattlesnakes exposes some interesting things about this potentially deadly character, whose bite most certainly causes sickness and even death.

It seems once a rattlesnake puts its piercing eyes on its pray it has a deadly drawing affect that causes its pray, such as birds, mice and even squirrels to be drawn into its reach. Their eyes become focused on the rattlesnake, knowing that they should run for their lives, but seemingly they become unable to move. Most are able to brush it off, yet some respond to the danger too late and are caught in the rattlesnakes deadly fangs. It has been reported that some birds and even squirrels have dropped from trees into the rattlesnake's range because they could not shake his luring eyes.

The flesh has that much lure and can become a deadly powerful force. God knew the dangers of the flesh and this is why He instructed Paul through the leading of the Holy Ghost to write in Galatians 5:16, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." James tells us, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:13-15)

Are you "Spiritually Wise" like the apostle Paul and James were? Do you look at temptations as potential danger and call upon Jesus to send the Holy Spirit to deliver you from the lures of the sinful flesh?

There is no escape from the need to depend on God's grace

What the apostle Paul is saying in Galatians is that there is no escape from the need to depend on God's grace. A "Spiritually Wise Christian" is like the Psalmist who wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 129:23-24)

Then he looks to the Word of God for that exposing process, because he knows that sin can easily slay its victim and if given rein to wrong desires, it can lead to lying, stealing, killing, and all the things that are outward expressions of an unwise deadly lifestyle. This particular child of God knows that, "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12) The wise Christian is like the Apostle Paul who wrote, "...Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law." (Romans 7:7)

The word of God is the X-ray of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." The Word of God is like a mirror for it reveals what is in our hearts. Dr. Jay Vernon McGee points out that if you had a spot on your face, the mirror will show it to you. However, it must be noted that the mirror cannot remove the spot. Heart spot removal is done by the one whom the law has revealed, the blood of Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, once sin has been exposed, the very first thing a wise sinner does is agree with God that it is sin and puts himself under the atonement blood of Christ. He puts himself under the blood of Christ by trusting in Jesus to be both Savior and Lord of his life. That is the wisest choice anyone can ever make.

When the Christian reads the Word of God so as to keep himself blameless, to keep himself steadfast or to find the practice of godliness, he is doing a wise thing

After a man recognizes that sin is a real threat to him, he is willing to look into the perfect law so as to understand all that sin is, he then protects himself through being attentive to the law of God, meditates upon what the Bible says, obeys what Jesus has taught him and then endures through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He has the heart of the psalmist who wrote, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalms 119:9-11) It is a wise man who will ask such a question of the Lord. The word "pure" (*zakah*) gives the connotation of being cleansed from sin. The application is when the Christian reads the Word of God so as to keep himself blameless, to keep himself steadfast or to find the practice of godliness he is doing a wise thing.

Jesus tells a parable of "The Wise and Foolish Builders" in Matthew 7:24-26, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Jesus is my kind of preacher and teacher for He is not only an expert in life and a scholar in His Father's Word, but He is a practical man. This parable is one of which could really happen and is a wonderful picture of a spiritual truth. It is an illustration that every wise Christian takes to heart.

Like a wise builder of a house, the Christian will think ahead about what needs to be done in regards to his eternal state and for his on-going relationship with Jesus Christ. If the foundation of a house is not set on solid ground, it cannot handle the every day settling of the constant moving of the earth. The more solid the foundation of a house, the more powerful storm it can withstand. The solidness of a Christian's relationship with the Lord Jesus will determine his ability to handle the ever-changing courses and storms of life down here.

Jesus Christ was a carpenter. (Mark 6:3) He knew houses and the building trade and He knows what it takes to build and maintain a righteous life before God His Father. In this parable Jesus is demanding two things that must be done if a Christian is going to be a wise builder. Jesus has always taught that the key to walking in the wisdom of God is the master plan of hearing and doing. The whole course of what Jesus is teaching is a radical submission to His Lordship.

A wise builder is one who puts Jesus words into practice; he is building Christ-like character that can withstand anything. He is unlike those who make just a profession, those who say the right words and make the right appearances, but when the storms of life come their structure fools no one, especially God. They are like the man in the parable of the sower in which the Word of God was sown on a rocky heart and he only lasts for a short time until trouble or persecution comes because of his faith. They are easily shaken and blown apart.

Therefore, it is critical that the Christian listens, be attentive and meditate upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is foolish to be mistaken about the teachings of Christ and His apostles. The first step to being "Spiritually Wise" is to lay ones life and heart in the hands of Christ, who is the foundation of mankind's salvation. After that he must give Jesus a hearing upon what He has to say in regards to his life.

Once hearing and perceiving, it is a necessity for wise living to do what Jesus and the Holy Spirit of God tells you to do through the written Word of God. William Barclay put it powerfully when he wrote, "Knowledge only becomes relevant when it is put into action... Knowledge must become action; theory must become practice; theology must become life."

There is no use in going to a heart doctor, if we are not going to do as he tells us to do. There is no use to go to a Christian teaching somewhere unless we are allowing the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts to put into action what we learn. And yet throughout America every Sunday morning thousands of people listen to the teaching of the Word of God and yet make little attempt to put it into practice. That makes them a foolish builder and they will not withstand the test. If we are going to be a witness for Christ we must be a follower that listens and does.

The type of obedience that Jesus is asking for is wonderfully illustrated in the story of two sailors who were in the Royal Navy and one was being severely punished for disobedience to the command of his naval officer. When the order was given this sailor stopped, asked questions and then began to argue, putting in his two cents, thus, putting himself and all who were serving with him in great danger.

The secular newspapers caught wind of the punishment and they wanted to let their readers hear the story and then be allowed to express their opinions on the whole matter.

In this story is a second man of true Navy character and he spoke up and shared a true story that taught him the value of automatic, unquestioning obedience.

They were out on some very rough sea and the ship he was on was towing a much heavier vessel. A storm came up, the night grew dark, the wind blew hard and the spray from the waves was hitting hard. All of a sudden a snap was heard and a voice cried out, 'Down!' On that very moment the entire crew flung themselves to the deck.

The cable that was hooked to the other ship and the broken parts that were connected to it were whipping around above them. One sailor wrote, "...like a maddened steel snake." The whole crew had automatically obeyed without question and not one sailor was injured. It is believed that if one sailor had stopped to question, put in his two cents, argued or tried to take over command, there would have been the lost of lives and many would have been injured. This wise sailor was quoted in the newspaper article saying, "Obedience saves lives." The whole of Scripture teaches that obedience to the Lord Jesus saves souls and keeps them on solid ground.

What causes so much turmoil in the lives of Christians and the church is that the children of God seem to forget that they live in a dangerous world. They forget while living in this sin darkened world, there needs to be that listening heart that is ever ready to hear that voice that calls out instructions, that heart that gives automatic and unquestionable obedience.

Going back to the parable, it is important to note that both builders in this parable heard and received instructions, Jesus said, "...everyone who hears this words of mine and puts them into practice..." in Matthew 7:24 and in verse 26 He said, "...everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice..."

The truth to today's teaching is for those who are in a church, have Christian parents, Christian friends or a source of some Christian influence such as through Christian radio, books, or television. If you have had or do have any of these influences in your life, then you are either a wise builder or a foolish builder.

Therefore, every human being who has been exposed to God's Word is a house that is being built on either solid ground or sandy soil. How a person builds determines his eternal destiny. How a person builds in this life makes all the difference between success or failure, life or death, reward or loss, acceptance or rejection, and standing or falling. With those facts before them, a wise Christian looks to the Master Builder's blue prints and not his own.

There is only one foundation on which to build. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Everyone is either building on the foundation laid down by the flesh of man, this world, the lies of the devil or the foundation laid for heaven. The Bible says that Christians are being built into a spiritual house and Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. (1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:20)

Spiritually wise Christians know that it takes time, energy and surrender, thus they deny themselves until diligent study has been done with some plan of application being put in practice. They give up slumber to seek for God's truths and they survive the storms of sickness, sorrow, suffering, disappointment, rejection, handicaps, loss, death, mistreatments, temptations and the list can go on and on. If a Christian builds upon faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, he can handle the severity of the storms. These Christians know the truth of what the Apostle Paul was writing about in Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son..." (Romans 8:28-29)

Spiritually Wise Christians grasp the truth that all circumstances, trials and temptations are for the revealing of what is yet in their heart. There may need to be a cleansing or just a revelation of the spiritual condition of the heart. These Christians have a God given ability to see life with rare objectivity and are given an ability to handle all that is thrown at them in stability.

Whose voice do you recognize, know and follow

Jim Berg wrote, "There is debate in Christian circles about whether we are supposed to concentrate on being a certain kind of person or doing certain kind of things. The truth embraces both. You are always going to be some kind of a person or another, and you are always going to be doing one thing or another. You cannot cease to be nor cease to do. The fact is you have to be a certain kind of person to do certain things."

Only "Spiritually Wise Christians" can express a life that walks in the wisdom of God. First they must recognize that there is that sinful nature of man which wars to keep them from enjoying the wisdom of God that is available upon the asking in Jesus' Name.

Wise Christians allow the Word of God to become a mirror and the plea of a real man of God is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 139:23-24)

Wise Christians will search the Word so as to live a life that does not hurt the heart of the Lord Jesus and they walk in the counsel of His Word.

Just as there were a dozen shepherds who walked away from the water hole in Africa, all speaking or singing in different tones and ways, there are many different voices that are calling to you every minute of the day. Just as the sheep all broke out of the huge flock to follow the voice they knew and trusted, people are following the call of the voice they know and trust.

Whose voice do you recognize, know and follow? "Spiritually Wise Christians" follow the voice of Jesus Christ who is most certainly the "Good Shepherd." And He says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

Let Us Pray!!!!

