

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Wisdom of God Lesson #11

It is important to note that wisdom is closely related to knowledge but the two are not synonymous. Wisdom is usually categorized as a communicable attribute. This means it is one of the attributes of God that is given to mankind. We are able to possess wisdom, though we will never be all wise like God. Wisdom is not only having knowledge and understanding, but knowing how to apply knowledge and understanding to life. God is not only all knowing, He knows how to use His infinite knowledge in the most perfect way. In this lesson we will consider the infinite wisdom of God and consider how that applies to our lives as believers.

I. DEFINITION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

A. Louis Berkhof defines the wisdom of God saying,

“That perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him the most.”¹

B. A. W. Tozer defines God's wisdom,

“Wisdom, among other things is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.”²

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

A. Louis Berkhof illustrates the wisdom of God saying,

“An uneducated man may be superior to a scholar in wisdom. Knowledge is acquired by study, but wisdom results from an intuitive insight into things. The former is theoretical, while the latter is practical, making knowledge subservient to some specific purpose.”³

¹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 69.

² A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 60.

³ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 69.

B. Thomas Watson said,

"The less probability in the instrument, the more is God's wisdom seen."

Watson then uses several illustrations to defend his statement.

"[Concerning Gideon's army] He reduces the army of thirty-two thousand to three hundred; and by taking away the means of victory makes Israel victorious. . . God had a design to bring His people out of Egypt, and a strange cause He takes to effect it. He stirred up the hearts of the Egyptians to hate them. . . The more they hated and oppressed Israel, the more God plagued the Egyptians, and the more glad they were to let Israel go. . . God had a mind to save Jonah when he was cast into the sea, and He let the fish swallow him up, and so brought him to shore. God would save Paul, and all that were in the ship with him but the ship must break, and they all come safe to shore upon the broken pieces of the ship. . . He has often made His church grow and flourish by persecution. . . The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied; like ground, the more it is harrowed, the better crop it bears. . . These hard frosts hasten the spring flowers of glory. . . He makes his people gainers by losses, and turns their crosses into blessings."⁴

III. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT THE WISDOM OF GOD

A. W. Tozer in his work *The Knowledge of the Holy* gave us these words to ponder:

"When Christian theology declares that God is wise, it means vastly more than it says or can say, for it tries to make a comparatively weak word bear an incomprehensible plenitude of meaning that threatens to tear it apart and crush it under the sheer weight of the idea. "His understanding is infinite," says the psalmist. It is nothing less than infinitude that theology is here laboring to express."⁵

B. J. I. Packer said,

"God's wisdom is not, and never was, pledged to keep a fallen world happy, or to make ungodliness comfortable. Not even to Christians has He promised a trouble-free life; rather the reverse. He has other ends in view for life in this world than simply to make it easy for everyone."⁶

⁴ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pgs. 74-75.

⁵ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 59.

⁶ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pg. 81.

C. Thomas Watson showing God's wisdom in salvation said,

"Now, while Mercy was thus debating with itself, what to do for the recovery of fallen man, the Wisdom of God stepped in; and thus the oracle spake:--Let God become a man; let the Second Person of the Trinity be incarnate, and suffer; and so for fitness He shall be man, and for ability He shall be God; thus justice may be satisfied, and man saved. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God, thus to make justice and mercy to kiss each other! Great is this mystery, "God manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:6). What wisdom was this, that Christ should be made sin, yet know no sin; that God should condemn the sin, yet save the sinner! Here is wisdom, to find out the way of salvation."⁷

IV. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. Amos 4:13 – “For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind And declares to man what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness And treads on the high places of the earth, The LORD God of hosts is His name.”
- B. Rom. 11:33 – “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”

C. **God’s Wisdom As Seen In Creation**

- 1. Psa. 104:1-35 – “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, 2 Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind; 4 He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers. 5 He established the earth upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; The waters were standing above the mountains. 7 At Your rebuke they fled, At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away. 8 The mountains rose; the valleys sank down To the place which You established for them. 9 You set a boundary that they may not pass over, So that they will not return to cover the earth. 10 He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; 11 They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up their voices among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works. 14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may

“Without creation, the wisdom of God would have remained forever locked in the boundless abyss of the divine nature.”
A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 61.

⁷ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 73.

bring forth food from the earth, 15 And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill, The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, 17 Where the birds build their nests, And the stork, whose home is the fir trees. 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats; The cliffs are a refuge for the shepherds. 19 He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting. 20 You appoint darkness and it becomes night, In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about. 21 The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God. 22 When the sun rises they withdraw And lie down in their dens. 23 Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening. 24 O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. 25 There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great. 26 There the ships move along, And Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it. 27 They all wait for You To give them their food in due season. 28 You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good. 29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire And return to their dust. 30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground. 31 Let the glory of the LORD endure forever; Let the LORD be glad in His works; 32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD. 35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth And let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!"

D. God's Wisdom As Seen In Providence

1. Psa. 33:10-11 – "The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation."
2. Rom. 8:28 – "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

E. God's Wisdom As Seen In Redemption

1. I Cor. 2:1-16 – "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing

away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ."

2. Eph. 3:1-10 – "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

V. ERRORS CONCERNING THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. Error -- Because there is evil in the world, God cannot be all wise.
- B. Error -- Because God's ways of doing things are not my ways, He must not be wise.

- C. Error - Because men have free wills, they are able to thwart God's wisdom.

VI. APPLICATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. Knowing God is all wise helps us in life and especially trials because we know that whatever God has caused or allowed to happen flows from perfect wisdom.

Louis Berkhof speaking of God's wisdom says,

"[God's wisdom] points to the fact that He always strives for the best possible ends, and chooses the best means for the realization of His purposes."⁸

- B. When we pray for God to rescue us, we never need to doubt that He can do it in the most wise timing and way because His wisdom is infinite.

A. W. Pink said,

"The wisdom and power of God being alike infinite, the accomplishment of whatever He hath purposed is absolutely guaranteed."⁹

- C. Knowing God is all wise helps us to trust God and is a shield against anxiety, worry, and fear.

"How long is it since you read right through the Bible? Do you spend as much time with the Bible each day as you do even with the newspaper? What fools some of us are!--and we remain fools all our lives, simply because we will not take the trouble to do what has to be done to receive the wisdom which is God's free gift."
J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pg.91.

- D. Just because our life is hard and trials abound, we can still trust that God's plan for us is the most wise plan and that it can't be improved upon because God is perfect in wisdom.

J. I. Packer speaking of Joseph's life as recorded in Genesis said,

"Joseph was being tested, refined, and matured; he was being taught during his spell as a slave, and in prison, to stay himself upon God, to keep cheerful and charitable in frustrating circumstances, and to wait patiently for the Lord."¹⁰

"Who works all things after the counsel of his own will."— Ephesians 1:11

⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 69.

⁹ A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pg. 19.

¹⁰ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pg. 86.

“Our belief in God’s wisdom supposes and necessitates that he has a settled purpose and plan in the work of salvation. What would creation have been without his design? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air, which was left to chance for its formation? Nay, in every bone, joint, and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood-vessel, you mark the presence of a God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. And shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in grace? Shall the new creation have the fickle genius of free will to preside over it when divine counsel rules the old creation?”

Look at Providence! Who knows that not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. God weighs the mountains of our grief in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances. And shall there be a God in providence and not in grace?

Shall the shell be ordained by wisdom and the kernel be left to blind chance? No; he knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which he has laid in fair colors, in the blood of his dear Son, but he beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by his grace; he sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He hath in his mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shouts of “Grace! Grace! unto it.” At the last it shall be clearly seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, Jehovah did as he willed with his own; and that in every part of the work of grace he accomplished his purpose, and glorified his own name.¹¹