

## The Wisdom of God

Rom 11.33-36

July 22, 2012

based on "God: As He Longs for You to See Him" by Chip Ingram

What is the most difficult situation in your life? What is going on right now that has you totally bamboozled? Whatever your particular problem is, whatever negative effect that problem is having on your life, imagine how different your life would be if you had complete confidence in the following statement.

The wisdom of God means that God will always bring about the best possible **thing**, by the best possible **means**, for the most possible **people**, for the longest possible **time**.

If that statement is true, then all the things in your life that don't make any sense, all the things that hurt, all the things you wish were different, take on a whole new dimension. You would never lose heart because you would know not only that God is in control of everything but also that if there were a better or gentler way to accomplish what God wanted done in your life he would be using it.

Think about the peace you would experience just knowing that your problem is bringing about the best possible results by the best possible means. No one could ever come up with a better way of reaching a better end.

I'm asking you to believe, truly believe, that God is all-wise. I'm asking you to believe that all the things in your life, including the things you wish weren't in your life, are either allowed by or orchestrated by a good, sovereign, holy, all-wise, loving Father. I'm asking you to believe that all the events in your life are God's A-plan, not his B-plan or C-plan, but God's A-plan for your life.

It sounds like a pipedream, doesn't it? But it's not. There's a name for what I've been describing. The Bible calls it "*the peace that passes all understanding*" (Phil 4:7). As a Christian, that peace is yours on one condition. To have that peace you must fully grasp what it means that God is all-wise because, if you can't do that, you will never be able to trust and rest in God's wise plan for your life.

To begin our investigation of God's wisdom, we need to define wisdom. Wisdom is not a matter of great knowledge. Some very intelligent people possess almost no wisdom. Wisdom has nothing to do with age or appearance. Wisdom is a matter of combining knowledge, experience, insight, and understanding in order to arrive at the best possible decision in any given circumstance. The Bible tells us that wisdom is rooted in the fear of God, who is the source of all wisdom.

Of course, God's wisdom far surpasses our wisdom because God sees all things actual and possible. A. W. Tozer writes, "[God's wisdom] sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no guess or conjecture. [God's] wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and thus is able to work toward predestined goals, with flawless precision."

Let me demonstrate the difference between our wisdom and God's wisdom. Some of you may think you know this story but stay with me. There is a twist at the end.

There once was a man who was a switch-tender for a railroad. His job was to throw switches which would route trains either to the north or to the south. He worked in a switch tower mounted high in the air so he had a good view of everything going on around him. The man, his wife and young son lived in a little house directly across the tracks from his switch tower.

One day, as he was bringing his father's lunch to him, the young boy's foot became wedged in the switching mechanism. The father saw the lad's dilemma. Just as he started down from the tower to help, the father heard the whistle of an oncoming passenger train. The train was on the track where the boy was trapped.

The train was too close and moving too fast for the man to reach his son. That poor man was now faced with the biggest decision of his life. He could switch the speeding train to another track which would derail the train and kill the 50 passengers on board but his son would live. If he doesn't switch the train, his son will die but the 50 people will live.

Which would be the wisest choice? I didn't say the best choice or the kindest choice. I didn't ask what would be your choice. Which would be the wisest choice? Which choice would bring the best possible result for the most possible people? Most of us would probably say the hardest and wisest choice would be to let the boy die and save the other 50 people. However, I submit we have no idea which would be the wisest choice.

What if that boy were the next great evangelist? What if the 50 people on the train died but the boy grew up to lead thousands of people to eternal life with Christ? What if that boy was going to be the one to find the cure for cancer or HIV? What if that great evangelist or research scientist weren't the boy but one of the people on the train?

We could never have enough knowledge to make the wisest possible decision in that case. The only one who could have the right answer is the only one who can see all things actual and possible. Only God knows the impact of every action of every person for both now and eternity.

Our lives are like stones thrown into a pond. The ripples we create collide and interact with the ripples other people create. Only the wisest God could track every action of every person and weave all of those actions into a coherent and predetermined end. It sounds like a monumental task to us, but God does it with the same ease as you take a walk on a spring day.

You are God's child. That means that God is using everything in your life to bring about the best possible results by the best possible means for the most possible people for the longest possible time. Only God can make the wisest possible choices.

So, instead of asking why God allows this or why God is, or isn't, doing something about that, instead of being critical of God, we can worship God for his wisdom – even when we don't understand. We can rest assured that what God does from his limitless wisdom is always the best possible good, by the best possible means, for the most people, for the longest time.

Now let's turn our attention to how God has revealed his wisdom to us. We have stated that God will do the best possible thing by the best possible means but how do we know that? What evidence do we have that tells us we can trust all things to God?

**Creation** displays God's wisdom. We live on a tiny planet in a larger solar system. Remove any planet from its orbit and our solar system falls apart. The axis of our planet is tipped 23 degrees. Move the axis 1 degree either way and some people would freeze and others would broil. That's just earth. There are 200 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy and 200 billion galaxies in space and God's wisdom controls each one.

Consider the delicacy of the earth's ecosystem. Slight changes can produce major results. The wrong bacteria in the right place has destroyed civilizations. One spark can wipe out an entire forest, but the ecosystem will replace the forest in time.

The thing about creation that amazes me the most is how much faith it takes for people to believe it's all an accident. It takes more faith to believe evolution than it does to believe creation.

God's wisdom also shows through **providence**. Providence isn't a word Lutherans use much. Providence simply means that God has plans and he will carry those plans out with or without human cooperation. In the sermon on God's sovereignty, I explained how through Daniel God foretold the empires of the Greeks, the Medo-Persians, the Babylonians, and the Romans. God's providence allowed those empires for his purposes.

Thirteen years ago, when I lost my job on the railroad, I couldn't see anything good in the future. I lamented the fact that a 23-year career had just gone down the drain. However, if I had never lost my job, I would never have entered the seminary and I wouldn't be here today. Looking back I can see, firsthand, the providence of God in my life.

God's wisdom is seen in **our redemption**. Redemption means to "buy back." We use it to speak of God's wise plan to buy us back from the slavery of sin into which we were born. From before the foundation of the world, God's wisdom planned for our redemption. God's love called for our returning to him. His wisdom, taking all things into account, planned for him to pay to himself the price we could never afford – the price of our sinfulness.

On the cross, the innocent blood of Jesus covered our debt. Jesus' death wasn't some unexpected blip on history. Jesus' death was part of the plan. Jesus explains the plan

like this, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Matt 20:28).

God’s wise plan for our redemption took everyone off guard. Even Satan and his demons had to be stunned. A teenage girl in a stable? A carpenter’s boy? Not a chance. Fishermen, liars, thieves, a zealot, and outcasts for disciples? The devil must have been rolling in laughter. A betrayal, a crucifixion, and a dead Messiah. When Jesus cried, “*It is finished,*” many people probably thought that he was finished. But he wasn’t.

Jesus defeated sin and buried it with his body. Jesus went to hell and proclaimed his victory to Satan – in person. Three days later, Jesus left that tomb and declared his victory, and our victory, over death. What looked like foolishness to mankind was the wisdom of God.

The ultimate way God shows us his wisdom is in the person of **Jesus Christ**. Paul calls Jesus *the Wisdom of God for us*. If you want to understand how life is supposed to work, if you want to know how to make wise decisions, you must get connected with Jesus and follow him. The wisdom of God’s heart is in the person of Jesus.

If you follow Christ, the wisdom of God will not only fill you it will also splash over to the people in your world. When God’s wisdom gives birth to peace-loving, gentleness, impartiality, and sincerity in your life, people will notice. Not only will your life be affected but the lives of those around you will be touched by God.

Last, we need to know how we are to respond to God’s wisdom. Responding to God’s wisdom is a full-time job. Our response must find a vent in our speech, our thoughts, and our actions. But that’s hard to do.

How do I respond when the wife and I aren’t getting along? How do I respond when my financial future is blacker than a thousand midnights? How do I respond when I feel overwhelmed, overloaded, ashamed, ready to give up? How do I respond to all the things God allows or sends into my life?

The answer is simple. Live wisely. Through Paul, God advises us, “*Therefore be very careful how you live – not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil. For this reason, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s Will is*” (Eph 5:15-17).

There are four things we can do to improve our ability to live wisely. Like any other skill we might develop, living wisely will require us to practice these four steps daily.

Wise living begins with living in **reverence** for God. This requires some explaining. Proverbs tells us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That means we accept the fact that God is Creator, Master, CEO of the universe. He’s holy and

awesome. You choose to live his way and submit your life to him.

The Greek word for fear is phobos (φοβος) – where we get our word phobia. One of the ways we should be living in fear of God is a fear that we will let God down. We should always live with a healthy fear that our lives would be a disappointment to God. How much would your life change if you didn't say or do anything without first thinking about how it would affect God?

Wise living grows by receiving **God's Word**. God gives wisdom but it doesn't come in a vacuum. As Paul reminded Timothy, *From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim 3:15-17).

As a man, I have an inborn aversion to reading instructions. This can and has led to some hilarious situations. But when we ignore the instructions God has given us, the results can only be disastrous.

God gave us the Bible as an instruction manual for life here on earth and life with him for eternity. It might help if you think of the word Bible as an acronym: *Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth*. Studying God's Word is more important than sleeping, golfing, boating, video games, ESPN, or any other activity of secular life.

Wise living requires specifically **asking** God. Studying God's Word is not enough. Listen as James speaks about seeking wisdom, *“But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind.”* (James 1:5-6).

When James speaks of doubting, the actual Greek means to be double-minded. Being double-minded about God's wisdom goes like this. “God, I need your wisdom in this situation. I'm not sure which way to go. So, give me the answer your wisdom provides and I'll consider it along with my other options.”

Wise living requires asking God for help and, when he shows us his wisdom, following through without hesitation. When you ask for God's help, you will always receive it. If you are open, God will show you the way; through people, his Word, circumstances. The key to wise living is following.

Wise living involves **trusting** God completely. This step follows all the others. Having reverence for God involves trusting God to be in control. Receiving God's Word involves trusting God to be the only true and accurate authority on everything. If you don't believe God's Word to be without error then you can't fully trust his Word. If you are double-minded when you ask for God's wisdom (his answers) then

you don't fully trust God to have your best interest in mind. Living wisely means trusting fully.

So, what's the hardest problem in your life right now? Does that problem look like it's invincible? Does it scare you or worry you? What would that problem look like if you truly believed that God knows your situation and he is working through that situation to accomplish the best possible results by the best possible means for the most possible people for the longest possible time?

We will never be able to trust what God is doing in our lives until we figure out his ultimate goal. God's primary purpose is not to make us happy, healthy, wealthy, and wonderful. God doesn't promise us easy lives where everything runs smoothly. Though God is committed to giving his children the best, our idea of what's best doesn't always match his idea of what's best. But make no mistake – GOD IS GOOD!!! Even in this fallen world we can be sure that God is working to bring about the best possible results by the best possible means, and in the end, that will make you and me just like Jesus.