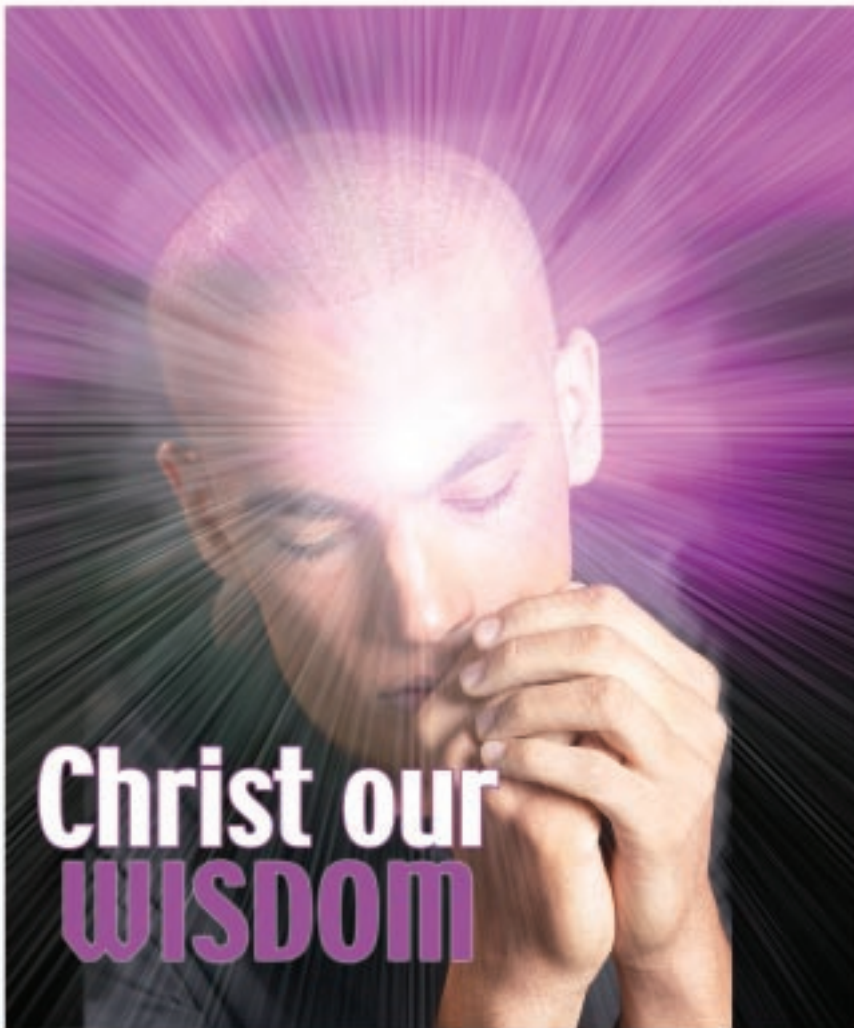


In the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, after Paul points out man's foolishness and helplessness, he points to Christ and says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (verse 30). The verse has sovereign grace stamped all over it. "But of Him [or 'through Him,' that is, 'through God the Father'] are ye in

who was made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. These terms cover the full range of God's saving mercies to His people. In this article we will concentrate on the first term, wisdom. We may define this wisdom as spiritual enlightenment that enables us to enter into a true knowledge of God and to see everything else in the light that He has shed upon us by the gospel.



The first effect of God's grace upon the sinner is to impart wisdom. Paul described Timothy's experience thus: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). The first step on the road of mercy is wisdom, and how vital it is!

Man, by nature, is a creature of darkness and folly. So said Paul of all men in Ephesians 4:18. He described them as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." This concurs with the testimony of Isaiah 44:19, where man's foolish idolatry is pilloried: "And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" The wisest of this world's wise men are but fools. Take time to

listen to men as they discuss the world, the human race, salvation, and eternity. You will see how quickly they manifest their folly. Man is in ignorance about himself and is equally ignorant of God, His person, power, and purpose.

The grace of God enlightens the blinded mind. As it was in creation, so it is with regeneration: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). Paul's commission in

Christ Jesus"; our standing in Christ is the result of God's doing and not ours. The Psalmist puts it this way: "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3). This is precisely the point that Paul is making in Corinthians: it is by God's action that we are in Christ. Not only that, but we are complete in Him

the gospel was to see the minds of sinners opened by God's word. He declares his calling in Acts 26:17–18 where he quotes the Saviour's words: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." This mission involves an undoing of the work of the devil, "the god of this world [who] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The enlightenment God grants to the sinner prompts wise action. Every convert experiences that awakening spoken of in the parable of the prodigal: "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (Luke 15:17). The madness of rebellion against God ceases and the settled calm of wisdom sets in, as was also apparent in the case of the man at Gadara delivered by the Saviour from the devil's power: "Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35). The devil's rule ends and Christ's begins, and it is marked by sanity and wisdom and decorum.

The mind of the regenerated person is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. We are not just enlightened so as to know Him, but we are enlightened in the knowledge that He possesses.

Christ becomes the convert's teacher. The first office occupied by Christ our Mediator is that of prophet: "Christ executeth the office of a prophet in revealing to us, by His word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation" (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Answer 24). The Scriptures tell us: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18, emphasis mine). Christ, through His word and by His Spirit, teaches His people (see John 20:31; John 14:26). The true believer will desire to be taught by Him (John 8:31).

The more of Christ's wisdom we gain, the more like Him we will become. It is stated of the Saviour when He was a boy of twelve: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:51–52). That growth is mirrored, to some extent, in the lives of every one of His people. Thus we are urged to have the mind of Christ (see Philippians 2:5–13). We are

to think as He thinks. We are to hold His views and opinions of all matters. We are to be obedient and submissive to His Father's will as He was. This call is echoed by Peter: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

This wisdom will result in a right and profitable employment of life. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24). It is the greatest wisdom to live in obedience to Christ. Of course the world will not commend us for living for Christ. In fact, the more we imbibe the wisdom of Christ, the more foolish we will appear to the world. Conformity to Christ in our minds and hearts and wills results in our becoming mad in the estimation of this foolish world. As Christ was considered mad by many in Israel, so will we be considered mad: "And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" (John 10:20). The world's view of the gospel will be its view of us: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23). As it was with Paul, so will it be with those who grow and increase in the wisdom of Christ: "Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:24–25). Such is the reproach of the cross of Christ. If we are enlightened in the knowledge of God, seeing things as they really are, then we will be most happy to bear such reproach.

Whatever men may say, Christ is our wisdom. He is the true light and we rejoice in His promise—"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). ■

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