

Seeking Wisdom

Jason Patrick Hilburn

For a person to be truly happy and content in this life and the next, he must seek wisdom: *“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul”* (Prov. 16:16-17). *“He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good”* (Prov. 19:8). Therefore, it is prudent for men to seek wisdom: *“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”* (Prov. 4:7; cf. 7:4; 8:5, 11). Wisdom is not something to be sought by young people only; it should be sought throughout all of our days: *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”* (Psa. 90:12). Of course, the opposite of wisdom is foolishness, which only leads to eternal pain and sorrow: *“Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard”* (Prov. 13:15; cf. 15:10; Rom. 6:21-23; Phil. 3:19; Rev. 20:15).

Those seeking wisdom need to be aware that the ultimate Source of wisdom is God, not men: *“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly”* (Prov. 2:6-7; cf. Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10-11; 15:33). Solomon asked God for wisdom and understanding (1 Kings 3:9-12), and the New Testament instructs us to do the same: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5). If one desires wisdom, let him not only ask God, but let him also proactively fill his mind with the Word of God. Paul wanted the brethren at Ephesus to be wise by understanding the will of the Lord: *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Eph. 5:15-17). He then explained how they could do this, by being filled with the Word of God (Eph. 5:18; cf. Col. 3:16; John 6:63).

Knowing that God is the ultimate Source of true wisdom, one may wonder if anything can be learned from uninspired men. If there were nothing to learn from uninspired men, then there would be no such thing as Bible studies, Bible classes, and sermons! Teaching and preaching involves taking the wisdom of God expressed in the Scriptures and explaining it to others. When the Law of Moses was read to the people of Ezra’s day, it was taught in a way that helped the people understand: *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* (Neh. 8:8; cf. Ezra 7:10). If the words of uninspired men were totally useless and forbidden, then a so-called “Bible class” or “sermon” would simply consist of reading

Scripture, with no discussion, illustrations, or applications. Although a preacher must “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2), he does so by using some of his own words to cause the hearers to better understand and see how God’s Word relates to their own lives. He can also show how a particular Scripture harmonizes with other Scriptures, thereby giving the listeners a better understanding of the entire Bible—not just the particular passage being read. Of course, all of this must be done in total harmony with all the Scriptures, and teachers will be held accountable for what they have taught (Psa. 119:160; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; James 3:1; 1 Pet. 4:11).

This writer has known some who seem to object to all uninspired writings, as if it were wrong for people to read any uninspired religious material. If it is wrong to read such, then it is also wrong to attend a Bible class taught by an uninspired teacher! Whether the uninspired words are spoken or written makes no difference; the principle is the same. Someone may have studied a particular Biblical subject more than someone else, and others can glean from that person’s studies. It is also not inherently wrong to quote from an uninspired source. Paul quoted uninspired men in certain circumstances, even though he would not have agreed with them on every subject (Acts 17:28; Tit. 1:12-13).

With that said, there is an inherent danger in the uninspired words of men. Men are fallible; God is not. “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psa. 118:8). Sometimes even faithful children of God will err from the Truth of God’s Word on a given subject. Hymenaeus and Philetus are notable examples of this:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:15-18).

It is indeed sad that brethren like Hymenaeus and Philetus erred from the Truth, but it is even worse that they spread their error like an infectious disease, causing other souls to be lost! Thayer defines the word translated as “canker” as “a gangrene, a disease by which any part of the body suffering from inflammation becomes so corrupted that, unless a remedy be seasonably applied, the evil continually spreads, attacks other parts, and at last eats away the bones.” Surely if those brethren who became diseased with the false doctrine had been diligently working to divide rightly the Word, they would not have fallen from the Truth (2 Tim. 2:15; cf. 1 Tim. 4:13, 15-16).

Sadly, many will believe a certain doctrine simply because those who teach it have a lot of influence or letters after their names. It may be that these “followers” are too lazy

to search the Scriptures for themselves, that they refuse to stand against those in their “clique,” or perhaps they simply have not grown to the point that they can “discern both good and evil” on their own (cf. Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; Matt. 5:6). Peter gives a warning about being led away into error by false teaching, and because of this danger, he commands Christians to grow:

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ... (2 Pet. 3:16-18).

Growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is critical to prevent Christians from being led away with the error of false teachers. May all Bible students be like the noble Bereans, because the apostle Paul wrote, “...your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 2:5).

<http://www.TheBibleDomain.com>