

Watch Where You Step (Part 2)

Ephesians 5:15-18

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I don't know if you saw it or not, but on December 12th, there was a disturbing article in USA Today (the newspaper). It was kind of an executive summary **and**, an expansion of a survey, and the results of, which had come out earlier that week - the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. The upshot of the article is that syncretism is on the rise in the US; that is, the mixing together of contradictory beliefs, a sort of Mr. Potato Head approach to truth and faith. The article was entitled "More US Christians Mix in Eastern New Age Beliefs". Cathy Grossman, the article's author, writes this: "Despite Americans' overwhelming allegiance to someone they call God (some 92% of Americans believe in God or say they do) in Pew's 2008 survey, 70% said, 'many religions can lead to eternal life' and 68% said, 'there's more than one true way to interpret the teachings of my religion.'" The article went on to say that that trend cuts across all faiths and it's true as well of all branches and all theological persuasions of the Christian faith as well – Catholic and Protestant, liberal, conservative. It seems to be a growing trend across the board.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the article, though, was the reason offered for why this odd intermixing of various ideas together is taking root in the American consciousness. Grossman quotes Stephen Prothero, who is the Director of Religious Studies at Boston University, as thinking that the reason is there is a "resistance to being told what to think", a resistance to being told what to think. Grossman adds this: "In short, we believe our own experiences are authentic and no authority can say otherwise." We believe our own experiences are authentic and no authority can say otherwise. Tragically, that means that the Christian culture is going the way of the Biblical fool because in Scripture, the predominant characteristic of the fool is that he is confident of his own thinking, of his own mind, of his own choices, of his own behavior. He refuses to hear and to heed God's revealed wisdom. He trusts his mind over the mind of God. God says such a person is a fool.

Now don't misunderstand. To be a fool, you don't have to actively set yourself against God; although it is true that one who actively despises God and His ways is a fool. But to qualify as a fool, you just have to be confident enough in yourself and your own ability to discern what's right and best for you, that you simply ignore God and ignore His revelation. Proverbs begins with the theme verse in Proverbs 1:7. Listen to it: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." From God's perspective, a fool is a person who has a proud self-confidence and who consistently makes moral choices and decisions without regard for his or her Creator and what He thinks. And that kind of foolishness produces spiritually irrational behavior.

Tragically, the news is filled with poignant examples of what happens when people abandon revelation and begin to rely on their own thinking instead, their own independent thinking. You could pick up any paper, any day of the week, and find numerous examples. This week I read that, according to the London Times, researchers now claim that dolphins rank second to humans in terms of intelligence. They have now...dolphins have displaced apes and chimps as being next smartest to human beings. But the article went on to say that those same researchers and scientists...and by the way, that may be true. I'm not arguing **that** reality, but **the** scientists and the researchers went on to say, that dolphins should be declared to be "non-human persons with specific rights." Now obviously, that kind of thinking ignores the divine revelation that man alone is made in the image of God. That's just one example of many, many examples in the culture of what happens when you abandon God's revelation, God's wisdom, and you embrace your own thinking.

As Christians, we are called to exercise Biblical wisdom, God's wisdom, and not to be fools. Paul reminds the Ephesian believers, that he loved so much, of this great duty in Ephesians 5. Let me read for you again the verses that we're looking at together. Ephesians 5:15-18. This is really the introduction to the section. You'll notice verse 19 is part of the same sentence, but it's a shift of thought and I'll explain that to you in a moment. So, we'll just read verses 15 to 18: "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So

then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...”

Beginning in chapter 4 and running all the way through the end of this book, as I have told you many times before, Paul is explaining to us the implications of our new position in Christ. This section begins in chapter 4, verse 1 with a call for us to walk worthy of our calling. How can we walk worthy of our new position in Christ? Well, we’ve already discovered several ways: by walking in unity in the church, by walking in keeping with the new life we have in Christ and not returning to the old life, by walking in a life of love that shows love to those around us in very practical ways, by walking in sexual purity as we’ve seen in the first part of chapter 5.

Several weeks ago, we began to look at one last way that you and I are to walk worthy of our calling. It’s the longest section in the entire letter. It begins with the verse I started reading with this morning, Ephesians 5:15, and runs all the way through 6:9. The theme of this long section appears in the command in verse 15: “walk... as wise”, walk as wise men and women.

Now let me remind you of how this long section unfolds. In verses 15 to 18, that I read to you, Paul gives us the command to walk in Biblical wisdom, the command to walk in Biblical wisdom, and he explains how to do that. And then, beginning in 5:19 running all the way down through 6:9, you have the consequences or results of walking in Biblical wisdom. Here’s what it looks like in real life as it fleshes itself out. In fact, all of those wonderful, familiar texts that we love in chapters 5 and 6 all stem from this one passage that I read to you this morning. In these verses, Paul confronts us with the command to walk in Biblical wisdom. Notice verse 15: “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise...” Paul means by our walk, he’s talking about the paths our daily life takes – the normal decisions you make, the normal thoughts you have in a given day’s time, what your life looks like each day. Let your predictable patterns of behavior, your habits, your lifestyle – when it comes to those patterns, we are not to live like fools. Instead, we are to consistently live like those God would call wise. That’s the command.

But in these four verses Paul not only issues the command, but then he explains how to carry out that command. He explains, or marks out, the path to a life of Biblical wisdom. Do you want to be wise as commanded here? Do you want to live a life of Biblical wisdom? Well, he explains how and we're looking at that together. There are several crucial components of a life of Biblical wisdom in these four verses, verses 15 through 18.

The first one that we studied last time: if you want to be Biblically wise, number one, examine your ways. Examine your ways. Look at verse 15 again: "Therefore be careful how you walk..." 'Be careful' is one of the common Greek words for 'seeing'. It means to really see things as they are. In this context, it means to contemplate, to weigh, to think carefully about. Paul is saying, 'Think about how your daily life is ordered. Don't live an unexamined life. Don't just be swept along. Don't get up every day and do what you've always done without stopping to think about the choices you're making.' If you want to live in Biblical wisdom, you must examine your life.

The second crucial component of a life of Biblical wisdom, that we saw last time, is in verse 16: seize every opportunity. Seize every opportunity. Notice he says: "making the most of your time, because the days are evil" – literally 'redeeming the time'. Paul wants us to know that if we're going to walk in Biblical wisdom, we have to redeem or buy up the opportunities that come our way. We are to live a life of Biblical wisdom by seizing every opportunity to advance in wisdom (why?) because the days are evil, because we are surrounded by evil and moral foolishness everywhere under the control of Satan himself. So, the only way to live a wise life in such an evil day is to live on purpose. Listen. Folks, we cannot allow ourselves to be swept along by the tide of popular opinion, by the philosophies and ideologies of the cultural elite in our society, by the reigning ideas of our times. Instead, we have to seize every opportunity to pursue Biblical wisdom.

Now that's just a brief review of where we've been. That brings us up to speed with the flow of this wonderful passage. In the next point that we come to today, Paul really gets

to the source of wisdom itself and to the third crucial component in a life of Biblical wisdom. The third component is this: understand God's will. Understand God's will. He begins in verse 17 with the negative. Notice what he says: "So then [in other words, in light of the command that I've given you to walk in wisdom] do not be foolish..." Don't be a fool. The word 'foolish', here, doesn't have to do with a lack of knowledge or intelligence. You can have a great deal of intelligence and be a fool from God's perspective. The foolish person is the person who fails to apply wisdom in the practical issues of daily life. The foolish person doesn't know how or refuses to make daily practical decisions and choices that reflect the will and purpose of God. As one author says, "It is moral stupidity in action."

To really understand what Paul is saying here, you have to understand that these words - "wise" and "foolish", "wisdom" and "foolishness" - have their root in the Old Testament, specifically in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, especially in Psalms and Proverbs where the writers, there, simplify life. We like to think of life as complicated. They don't. They simplify it. They basically say, 'In life, there are two basic paths'. In fact, turn back with me to Psalm 1. This is my favorite example of it. Psalm 1. And in Psalm 1:1-3, you have the way of the righteous explained, the blessed man - that is, the enviable man - and how he lives and what his life looks like. In verse 4 of Psalm 1, you have the contrast, the wicked. They are not so and then they are described. Verse 6 summarizes this way: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." Understand, folks, there are only two paths in life. There is the way of the righteous that ends in life and there is the way of the wicked that ends in death. As you sit here this morning, you are on one of those paths. In the mind of God, there's no lack of clarity about your situation this morning. You are either on the path of the wicked or you are on the path of the righteous, and they end up in totally different places.

But I want you to notice the righteous and how they're described in verse 1: "How enviable (is literally what that word means, how to be envied) is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" Now folks, when you're awake, you're either walking or standing or sitting. In

other words, it's all of life. And he uses three nouns to describe the wicked sinners and scoffers. That's not a group out of the larger group of sinners. That's all unbelievers. Every unbeliever, without exception, is included in verse 1. And notice, the righteous man completely abandons every path of those who live in rebellion against God. In other words, he abandons every human way. That's the point of verse 1. He abandons every human way. And notice, verse 2, he embraces only God's way: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." So, listen carefully. You want to know, this morning, God's perspective of you? The way of the righteous is the way of the Bible and the way of the wicked is everything else. So, ask yourself this morning: what path are you on? Are you on your own path or are you on God's path? The way of the righteous is the path to Biblical wisdom. The way of the wicked is the path of the fool. You can identify, here's what I want you to get from this: you can identify a truly righteous life, a wise man, by how he responds to God's way as it's revealed in the Bible. In fact, even the position of Psalm 1 tells us that. If I had to give a theme to the book of Psalms, it would be this: it is a pattern of worship, of personal worship. And positioned as kind of the gatekeeper at the entrance to the true worship of God is this psalm which says there are two ways. And every person who would approach God in worship has to make a choice between those two ways. It's a choice you have to make, and I have to make. It's the way of the Bible and it's every other way. Are you willing to abandon every human way, including your own way, and embrace only God's way? If you're walking in step with various human ways, then you're a fool.

By the way, it's true that this morning I could look at your life, others could look at your life, and say you are on the path of the righteous or you are on the path of the wicked as a whole - the predominant, overarching direction of your life. It is also true of specific areas of our lives because you can be following God's wisdom in your family life and, at the same time, worldly wisdom in your career. You can practice Biblical wisdom in your parenting and worldly wisdom in how you handle your money. You could practice Biblical wisdom in your finances and worldly wisdom in how you use your free time. The bottom line is this: in all of life and in every area of life, we are either living by God's wisdom or by demonically inspired human wisdom. You are either pursuing

God's way or the wrong way. The question is, this morning, what path are you on? Are you on the path of the fool or are you on the path of the righteous and the wise?

You know, people do what they do. They make that choice based on the prevailing influences in their lives. In fact, let me show you the paths most people are on; the controlling influences in most people's lives that drive them to the path of the wicked, the way of the fool. One of them is the thinking of the age, the mindset of the world around us. That's here in Psalm 1. Notice he says we're not to walk, that is, order our daily lives after the counsel or advice of the wicked. In other words, don't let the people and the culture around you shape your thinking and make decisions about what you do based on that. Paul says the same thing in Romans 12:2. He says don't allow the age in which you live (literally he says) to push you into its mold. "Do not be conformed to the age in which you live [that is, to the mindset of the age and times in which you live], but rather be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." Listen. People are driven and influenced by the, the people around them, by the culture, by the thinking of the age in which they live.

There's another powerful influence that drives most people - not only the thinking of the age, but the desires of the flesh. 1 Peter 4:2 says we're now as Christians "to live out the rest of the time [here] no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." Did you see how he juxtaposed the two? People are either living for the will of God or, as we used to, living for the lusts or cravings of men.

In Ephesians 2:3, he puts it like this: "Among them (that is, among unbelievers) we too all formerly lived in the cravings of our flesh (our fallenness), indulging (and the New American Standard text says 'desires' - the Greek word is 'wills', indulging) the wills of the body and the mind..." We were driven by our fallen bodies and minds. We were pursuing the desires that they create, and we gave ourselves to those pursuits. And many people are driven by the desires of the flesh.

There's a third influence in the lives of many people. It's the will of Satan. In First, excuse me, in 2 Timothy 2:26, Paul, writing to Timothy, says that the elders need to be willing to help and able to help those who are locked in error, that "they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil (the trap of the devil, listen), having been held captive by him to do his will." People who are locked into false religious systems, and philosophies, and ideologies are driven by Satan himself. They are driven by his will and his ideas. In other words, when you look at those three influences, as we learned in Ephesians 2, the major influences in the lives of unbelievers are the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you're not living God's way, then you are under the control of one or more of those things. You are living the life of a fool.

You know, people say, 'Listen. I'm not going to go in for this or that because I'm my own person.' You heard that? I'm my own person. No, you're not. Nobody's his own person. That's the point of the Scripture. You're either God's man or you're the devil's man. But you're not your own person. You are the slave of somebody. It's either God or the devil. But you are not your own person. Don't be foolish. Don't live like you used to live, and like unbelievers live, under the power and influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Then he turns positive. Notice verse 17: "So then do not be foolish [don't live like that] but understand what the will of the Lord is." Now notice the comparisons in this passage. Back in verse 15, he says a person is either unwise or they're wise. And then in verse 17, he doesn't use the word 'wise'. He uses the word 'foolish', but not the word 'wise'. Instead, he says, we are either foolish or, and we expect him to say wise, but he says, or we understand the will of the Lord. So, track with his point here: to be foolish is simply to fail to understand God's will, and to be wise is to understand it and to do it. So, you either understand and do the will of God, or, you're a spiritual fool.

The Greek word translated 'understand' here, 'understand the will of the Lord', means to comprehend. It means to gain insight into something. You see, God has already made His will known. We are called to understand it. Paul here wasn't speaking like a Greek

primarily. He was speaking like a Hebrew. He's not talking about a mental grasp of the will of God, an intellectual understanding, but he's talking about understanding it with an eye to doing it. As Harold Hoehner writes in his excellent commentary, "This understanding is more than just the understanding of facts. It is an intelligent grasp of knowledge that has resulting consequences." By the way, this word 'understand', in the original language, is in the present tense. It's a command in the present tense. It's something that we are to continually be doing. So, in other words, Paul is saying this: 'Make it your constant preoccupation to understand the will of God.'

To keep from being foolish, we have to understand and do the will, notice he says, "the will of the Lord." Now in Scripture, sometimes we have a reference to God's will. Here, specifically, it says the Lord's will. The word 'Lord' is used a number of times in Ephesians and it is always, without exception, referring to Jesus Christ. So here he's saying, 'I want you to understand the will of your Lord, that is, Jesus Christ.'

Now what does he mean, 'understand the will of Christ?' Well, we need to back up here. I need to give you a little explanation. Whenever Scripture speaks of God's will, and this is very important, listen carefully. Whenever Scripture speaks of God's will, it is primarily referring to one of two concepts. The first concept is it can be God's moral will, God's moral will. This is sometimes called, by theologians, the will of precept or the will of command. This is God's will. When we talk about God's moral will, we're talking about His commands, His laws, that express His moral will for us, the laws He lays down for creatures that demand obedience. God's moral will is contained in the commands of Scripture. Man can choose to obey them. He can choose to disobey them. But there they are. This is God's moral will. It's like the will **of** kings on earth. They make their laws. Their subjects can either obey them or disobey them, but those laws express their will. Here you have the moral will of God. These are His laws. He doesn't force obedience to them. He lays them out and we choose to obey them or disobey them.

There's a second concept when the expression 'the Lord's will' or 'God's will' occurs can mean - not only God's moral will, but secondly God's sovereign will. This is

sometimes called, by theologians, the will of decree. It refers to the eternal, immutable plan of God which is always, without exception, carried out in human history. Wayne Grudem in his 'Systematic Theology' defines it like this: "the eternal plans of God whereby before the creation of the world, He determined to bring about everything that happens." Every detail, He decided how it would fall out. That's His sovereign will. Sometimes Scripture is speaking of His moral will. Sometimes it's speaking of His sovereign will.

Now look back at Ephesians 5. In verse 17, Paul is not talking, here, about God's sovereign will, about whether you remain single or married or marry or whether, **if** you're going to marry, God's will about whom you will marry, or where you would live, or what your career would be. When Paul refers to the will of God, here, he's talking about God's will for us that is clearly revealed in His Word. That'll become clearer in just a moment. There are choices God clearly commands in Scripture. There are others He clearly forbids. This is God's moral will. All of Scripture is God's moral will, that is, His commands for us, His will for us.

But it's interesting because, when you start talking about God's moral will, the New Testament specifically identifies several things as God's will for you and me. You know, I have people ask me all the time, you know, about God's will. Well, let me tell you what God's will for you is. You ready? The Bible's very clear. Here's God's will for you. Number one: God's will is for you to experience salvation. 1 Timothy 2:4 – "He desires [literally 'will'; now this isn't His sovereign will because not everyone will be saved. This is His moral will. This is His command. He wills] all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." What's God's will for you? To turn from your sin and to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Here's a second thing that's God's will for you. It's service or we could say self-sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2 – "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice...so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." It's God's will for you that you

not live for yourself once you experience salvation, that you live for Him, that you offer yourself up as a sacrifice to live for the One who loved you and gave Himself for you, as Paul says.

A third part of God's will for you is submission to authority, the authorities God has put in your life. 1 Peter 2:13: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution...For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." It's God's will for you to humble yourself, put yourself under the authorities He's put in your life. That's God's will.

God's will is for your sanctification, for you to be progressively made more like Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 – "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." You don't have to ask about what God's will is. This is God's will. God's will for you is thanksgiving, a life of thankfulness. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." And we could probably want to leave this last one off, but suffering, some degree of suffering in this world. 1 Peter 3:17 - "(God) if God should will it, you should suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." God may determine to take us through suffering of various kinds. That's God's will for you.

You say what is God's will? There it is. That's God's will. You say, 'Well, wait a minute. What about all those decisions that aren't mentioned in the Bible? You know, things like my education, and my career, and whether or not I should marry, and whether or not to buy a house, and which house, and where to live?' Well, Scripture also lays down guiding principles about those specific decisions that we need to make. For example, the Bible nowhere tells us who to marry. At least I hope you didn't use the Bible like a sort of Ouija board, you know, like I've seen some people do – sort of just close their eyes, point to a passage and say that's what God wants me to do. There are some names in there you probably wouldn't want to consider marrying even if you met them. Maher-shalal-hash-baz probably wouldn't be a husband you ladies would want. The Bible doesn't say whom to marry, but it does say that the person you marry, if you're

a Christian, must be a believer and must not be living in a pattern of unrepentant sin, because, we're not even supposed **to** fellowship with a Christian, someone who professes to be a Christian, who's living in a, in unbroken sin. It also - the Bible gives us specific character qualities that God values in men and God values in women that should help shape our decision. What about those issues that aren't addressed directly in Scripture, those things we call issues of conscience? Well, while the Bible doesn't tell us what choice to make, as we saw in Romans 14 a year or so ago, it lays out clear principles for how to make those decisions.

So then, all those decisions that are not addressed directly by the Scripture we are to come to the Scripture and see if the Scripture does speak to them in any way and, then, we are to use godly wisdom to make that decision. We're to seek counsel from others – “in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” We're to consider what would bring God the most glory. We're to look at, wisely, at our own gifts, and skills, and abilities, and financial situation, etc., etc., etc. And then we're to make, we're to pray for God's wisdom and direction, and then we're to make a decision. But God...listen to me...God is not going to tell you what decision to make on those things - whether through some fleece, or through some hoop you ask Him to jump through, or whether through some subjective feeling. You know, I hear a lot of Christians say, 'Well, I'm looking for peace.' Listen. God didn't promise to direct your life that way. God has spoken to you, ultimately and finally, in a book. And your job is to discern and know His mind, here, and then to make wise decisions from there. If you want to read more about this issue and you, young people particularly, who are looking at 'What do I do in life? Who should I marry?' and all those big decisions and for many of the rest of you, I would recommend to you Garry Friesen's book 'Decision Making and the Will of God', 'Decision Making and the Will of God.' It is in the top ten books of books that have influenced me in my own life, and I would highly recommend it to you.

Now go back again to Ephesians 5:17. Understand then, Paul is, here, not commanding us to understand God's sovereign will. **He's** commanding us to continually be pursuing an understanding of God's revealed will, His moral will, His commands as laid out in the

Word of God. But how? How do we do that? Well, understand, you really have to begin with this foundational affirmation. The source of all true wisdom is whom? God. Okay? God. Job 12:13, "With Him are wisdom and might; to Him belong counsel and understanding." Proverbs 21:30, "There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord."

So, if all true wisdom comes from God - here's the sixty-four-million-dollar question - how does He give us that understanding? How does it get from God to us? Well, there are three primary means and I want to finish our study today by letting you very practically understand how to get to the wisdom of God and see it incorporated into your own life - three primary means by which you and I can receive the wisdom of God, this understanding of His will, His revealed will. Number one: through an understanding of the Word of God, through an understanding of the Word of God. Turn back to Deuteronomy. I love this text - Deuteronomy 4. Moses is giving a series of speeches on the plains outside of the promised land just before the people are going to march in and take Jericho and he gives them a reiteration of God's law as it was given at Sinai. Now listen to what he says to them. Deuteronomy 4:5: "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it." So, we're talking about God's statutes and judgments commanded through Moses. So, we're talking about God's Word. Verse 6: "So keep and do, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" Verse 8: "What great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" He said, 'You want wisdom? You want understanding? Embrace the Scripture. Embrace the Word of God that's been revealed to you.'

This is the constant message of Scripture. Psalm 19:7: "the testimony of the Lord [that's a synonym for God's Word, the testimony of the Lord] is sure, making wise the simple." God's Word will take the naive person who is open to everything, spiritually, and will make him spiritually wise. Psalm 111:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of

wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do..." Huh! Look at Psalm 119. Of course, all of Psalm 119 exalts the Word of God. We could go through it all, but I just want you to see two verses. Psalm 119:98: "Your commandments [talking about the Scripture again] make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight [more understanding] than all my teachers, for Your testimonies [Your Word] is my meditation." It's not rocket science, folks. God grants us His wisdom through His revealed Word.. Paul, in 2 Timothy 3, writing to his young son in the faith, Timothy, says, 'You know, from childhood, you've had the sacred Scriptures, those sacred writings, talking about the Old Testament, "which (is what?) is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation that is in Jesus Christ."

The Scripture – it gives us the wisdom of God. That's the source. If you want to live a wise life, listen carefully to me. If you want to live a wise life, you have to be willing to turn from your loved and cherished independence. You have to be willing to give up your own ideas about what's right in every area of life, what Proverbs 14:12 calls "the ways that seem right to a man", and, instead, you must embrace God's way revealed in His Word. William Hendriksen, the great Presbyterian commentator, puts it well when he says, "Do not depend on your own acumen. Do not regard the advice of other people as the ultimate touchstone of the truth. Let the will of your Lord as He has revealed it by the means of His own Word, and example, and by the mouth of His chosen messengers be your standard and guide." You want to be wise? It's found right here. That's the source of the wisdom of God.

There's a second means through which we're granted the wisdom of God and that's through our requests for wisdom in prayer, through our requests for wisdom. You remember the Lord's Prayer? I won't have you turn there, but Matthew 6:10 - you remember what Jesus taught us to pray, the third of the six, sort of, categories of prayer? He said, "Pray this...Let Your will be done on earth (what?) as it is in heaven." Now He wasn't talking about God's sovereign will because guess what? God's sovereign will is done on earth as it is in heaven. He's talking about God's revealed will because that's what's not done on earth as it's done in heaven, primarily. Okay? So, He's saying I want

you to pray, 'God, let Your revealed will be done here (that is, in my heart, in the life of my family, in the life of my church, in the life of Your people, in the life of the people I work with) as in heaven.' So, pray that God would grant that wisdom. It's not enough just to have God's wisdom and to read it. There are plenty of people who read the Bible, from time to time, who don't gain God's wisdom. It takes the work of God enlightening the mind, so pray for that enlightenment. In Colossians 1, Paul prays this for the church in Colossae. Colossians 1:9, he says: "For this reason also, since the day we heard of your faith, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be [listen to this] filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding..." Paul says, 'I'm praying that you will get it, that you'll understand the Word of God.' So, through the Word of God and through prayer.

Thirdly - through Christ, through Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:30: "By His doing we are in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us [what?] the wisdom of God..." Colossians 2:3: "in Him [in Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Listen. Christ is the gate into wisdom, onto the wise path. You cannot live a life of wisdom without going in and through Christ and living in Christ your entire life.

Now there's, as we close our time, there's one passage that brings it all together. I want you to see it. Turn with me to Proverbs 2. Proverbs 2 and we'll be done. Verse 6, Proverbs 2:6 - "For the Lord gives wisdom..." Okay, He's the source, He's the One who gives it to us. How? "...from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." As Derek Kidner said, "Wisdom comes by revelation. God speaks and gives us His wisdom." But how do we mine the wisdom that is found in God's Word? How do I get the wisdom that's here into my mind and into my heart and into my life? Well, notice verse 6 begins with the word 'for'. It's connected to a larger context. Go back to verse 1. You want God's wisdom to become yours? How do you approach the Scripture? Here's how you should: "My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you..." So, we're talking about words, commandments, receiving them, treasuring them. "...make your ear attentive to wisdom; incline your heart to understanding..." Seek it out. And then comes prayer: "...if you cry for discernment,

lift your voice for understanding; if [**and** then here comes the diligence with which all this to be done, if] you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures..." If all your heart is in the pursuit of Biblical wisdom in the Word of God - if you cry out to God for understanding, if you search this Word as if you were searching for hidden treasures and for silver, and you cry out to God to open your mind to understand it, if you seek her as silver and you search for her as hidden treasures, "...then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

Notice it's an if-then. Verse 1: 'if'. Verse 3: 'if'. Verse 4: 'if'. Verse 5: 'then'. So only to the one who approaches the Word of God like that - with that spirit, with that disposition, with that diligence, with that spirit of dependence crying out that God would open our hearts and minds to understand it – only to that person does the wisdom of God become clear and then manifest in the life. And by the way, you don't just get an ordered life of wisdom. Notice verse 5. Here's the real end. You get God Himself.

This morning, you're on one way, one of two ways. You're either on the path of the righteous wise or you're on the path of the wicked fool. And don't be deceived. Those two paths have completely different ends. Paul says, 'Walk in wisdom. Understand the will of the Lord as it's revealed in His Word.'

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your truth. Lord, I know there are people here this morning who know in their heart of hearts they have ignored You, they have walked in their own way. O Lord, remind them this morning that he who has himself for a counselor is a fool and has a fool for a counselor. Father, I pray that You would open up their hearts to see the reality of their circumstance and condition and may they want more than anything else to honor You, their Creator. May they turn from their sin, their own way, their stubbornness, their hard-heartedness, and may they turn in repentance to the One who made them.

Father, for those of us who are in Christ, for those of us who profess Him, don't let us be foolish. Lord, don't let us live out our daily lives following our own ideas, following the ideas of the culture around us, embracing the latest philosophy or concept to come down the pipe. Father, I pray that You, instead, would give us a heart that longs for Your wisdom as it's revealed in Your Word – not only to know it, but to see it fleshed out in our lives every day with the choices and decisions we make in our homes, and in our marriages, and in our work, and in our schools, in our relationships. Father, don't let us walk the path of the fool and end up in destruction. But may we walk the path of wisdom. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen!