



Chronicles of Diversity

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Solomon's folly today

In my years in church I really don't know how many direct sermons I have heard on 1 Kings 3, where God speaks to the new king Solomon in a dream, "Ask! What shall I give you?" I would guess that it is at least a dozen. The number of times that this God question and answer discourse and the results have just been mentioned in some sort of context, probably runs well into the hundreds. In fact, I have heard comments about Solomon's gift of wisdom twice in the last two days.

Of course the answer is that Solomon requests wisdom to lead God's people Israel. "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil."

The preacher, or the commentator then launches into this wonderful description gathered from the text on just how wise was Solomon, and all the great and wonderful things

that God given wisdom was able to do for Solomon and for Israel. Of course Solomon's fall into sin and this problem with the ladies is reserved for the next week's episode. That, is then spun in the typical "thou shalt not" legalism so prevalent in most of Protestant evangelicalism.

In my own questioning nature, my question as always been, it seems to me Solomon's request of God must have in some way been amiss considering the long term results? Or early Solomon must not have been all that wise to begin with, so what's the big deal? The answer of course is that God gave Solomon precisely what he ask for, temporal gifts and blessings. But if Solomon really was so smart, why didn't he ask God, to empower him with the ability to live in God's holiness?

It really takes very little Bible knowledge to discern, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the*



Holy One is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10 So if Solomon was so wise, why did he not always realize that all of his wisdom came from God alone? Of course, if Solomon was the author of this proverb he must have learned it in some fashion. Like most of the rest of us the hard way.

The problem is with context, Solomon can not be the greatest and wisest saint one week and a fornicating scoundrel the next. Either there is something wrong with your common sense, or your systematic theology. The problem is with evangelical systematic theology, if that is not an oxymoron. Solomon was both saint and sinner at the same time. But then again Solomon was never privileged to our modern methods to “get saved.” That would have surely kept him on the straight and narrow.

Matthew 6:33 states: *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

That New Testament admonition exhortation comes after hearing the second week’s sermon, then after coming forward to rededicate your life or making a silent vow to do the same, something happens on the way home from church and you have already blown it.

The point is that you do not have within your being the ability, longing, desire, or aptitude, to seek God in any fashion. Matthew 6:33 is impossible for you to accomplish. Period! But that concept is as un American as Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. Sad to say the understanding is also impossible for most evangelical Christians to grasp either. “God helps those who help themselves,” is not in Solomon’s proverbs, nor anywhere else in the Bible. The Bible does say, “That all good people go to heaven.” The problem is that the 99 of the earth’s inhabitants that personally consider themselves part of the good people majority, do this without an outside absolute to quantify and qualify their internal goodness.

The Bible does have such a measuring rod, which must be presented somewhat in context so that we can infuse some of what it truly says in Romans 3:10 18

As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

“Their throat is an open tomb;

With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;

“The poison of asps is under their lips”;

“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

And the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

The power to be as wise as Solomon without falling into the sin of lechery is available to all. The power to seek first the kingdom of God also is available to all. This is represented in 2 Corinthians 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

As impossible as it is for us to understand and comprehend, with God it is not impossible Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27, Luke 1:37, 18:27 . That treasure in earthen vessels from above is in the power of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ received through faith in His propitiatory sacrifice on the cross for my sins. It is His righteousness imputed to me a sinner, that makes me holy to God and empowers me through the Holy Spirit to live in slow progression toward the Bible’s unreachable standards of God’s holiness.

To put it plainly so that we can understand, Solomon’s folly today, is that we like the king, ask God for wisdom to live and rule in this world, when the request we should be making is that God would keep us in His Grip so that we might walk in the power of God, while still being and appearing as earthen sinful vessels.

Some years ago, I was employed briefly as a business broker. In the office was a really strange man named Bob. I could tell that Bob had some strong religious convictions that I was unfamiliar with, and hence could not place. I mean, he

obviously didn't seem to be involved in one of the cults, and in the back of his car he had a Bible. Finally, the situation presented itself and I had guts enough to ask Bob about his religious convictions. Much to my amazement Bob turned out to be a Roman Catholic and he and his wife traveled a great deal in this country and abroad holding lay "Jesus Weekend" seminars in Roman Catholic churches. I was always impressed with Bob's response on why he did this. Simply, he considered the Roman Catholic church the largest and most diverse mission field on the earth.

The couple of thoughts about Solomon got me to thinking that really, I would still consider Bob's statement about the Roman Catholic mission field to be true worldwide. I would have to say however, that Protestant evangelicalism is the largest and most diverse mission field in the United States. Sure there are problems with evangelicalism in the rest of the world, but there is something about the lack of affluence among missionaries and the local people that has a tendency to force people to look at essential needs, rather than what makes people feel good about their present circumstance.

Wonder Springs and Chronicles of Diversity is an unusual evangelical ministry. For one thing on a regular basis you will see the word propitiation used and explained, so it may appear that you may have never heard it before. We don't use the word substitutionary atonement, nor do we quote from the NIV Nearly Inspired Version even though it is the most used "translation" in America. We talk about Christ's imputed righteousness to me a sinner. You don't see any wonderful remarks about evangelical patron saints John Wesley or Charles Finney. I do wish I had more time to see what Chuck Spurgeon had to say even though he was a true Calvinist. Luther and Calvin I do have in my library, but just like everyone else I don't have time to read them either.

Then there are my thoughts that much of American evangelicalism's emphasis on stuff gets in the way of people truly understanding the gospel and getting saved. Statistics also point out Ted Turner and others extremely hostile to Christianity, had a strong dosage of evangelical

legalist piety from which to ferment their disdain. The flip side of that concept also shows that the greatest force in getting and opening people's lives toward God is the witness of natural law and common grace, not revivals and church. The empirical evidence that the Bible belt exists outside major metropolitan areas should be sufficient, but sociological research in so called primitive cultures show that they have a strong belief system in a transcendent God not all that different than what the Apostle Paul encountered with the Greeks on Mars Hill.

You will probably read more about how you were adopted legally as a child of God during those holy week events, rather than some latest place to get your warm fuzzies massaged. But then I guess I learned that the hard way, just like Solomon learned that the knowledge of God is the source of all wisdom. That adoption concept really works to renew your mind, when those fuzzies were for some reason flushed down the toilet of life, or figuratively, or naturally swept away by a hurricane into the Gulf of Despair.

Of course there is really good news, and that is found above in this week's propitiation section. Furthermore, there really is hope in the youth, that by God's grace they are still hungry for a life that truly makes sense in this world gone mad with radical Islam and terrorism, unbridled and unregulated corporate greed, now appearing uncontrollable by nation states. There is also hope in foreign missions where the gospel understanding of a better life in eternity is still a definable entity, and Jesus Christ is that door to be opened by simple faith by His sacrifice on the cross. Finally, American evangelicalism is the greatest mission field in North America. As natural cultural stupendous changes continue to unfold and we find out again that temporal stuff is just that, there is hope just as many other ministries are also proclaiming, we don't need a revival, God needs to give us a new Reformation. That will bring light and direction to this dark time.

As I was riding to church Sunday, these thoughts were cycling through my mind. I was thinking about how to tie all this together into ministry. I had come to some hopeful conclusions when Josh and Donnie got up to talk about the youth group wanting to have a bake sale to raise money for a mission in Asia. There it was just as I was thinking, youth, missions,

and eating and fellowship, the only thing that would make it better would be some music.

Being a lifelong participant in competitive sports, I definitely understand the value of team work to accomplish the victory. However, that gift is not available to most people. Music however, can be enjoyed, whether you play or just listen. As Jack Gladstone's song states, "The greatest gift is not of gold, but in art that awakens the soul." Some of the research following the last Reformation indicates that there was a progression that took place as the church and western culture changed dramatically in a short period of time. That occurred as the artists read the Reformers writings, the artists then wrote music and painted pictures celebrating God's true grace found in the gospel. It was art, not theology, that finally dramatically changed that medieval society, by artistically illustrating God's gifts to the common man and thereby changed common man.

Therefore, as the Lord provides we shall refocus the ministry along these lines. The first is to move out of Seattle to the place I own up on the Kettle River in NE Washington State to cut overhead and increase working space. Second, put together a mobile barbecue rig that can be taken to various locations to promote foreign missions by enlisting church youth groups for assistance. This concept is beyond the normal church picnic concept to a real community gathering, hopefully with music that the whole community would enjoy. Third, do creation based leadership training programs involving actual science training along with human leadership skills. Forth, to continue Chronicles of Diversity and update the web site to include Podcasts and similar media enhancements.

Now the name for these events will be Wonder Springs Rendezvous, which just like in the frontier days are where it is happening in the total community during it's duration. Sponsors for the Rendezvous could be the missions organization, youth groups, churches, musical groups, or we might do it ourselves if we feel the need, or perhaps after another stupendous change event like hurricane Katrina.

So far there seems to be definite progress along this line, including a unique trolley bus to carry the barbecue equipment from place to place. Of course the cost of this vehicle is well beyond the ministry means, but that is what faith is all about.

Most Christians would say the gospel contains the power to change our present lives and our eternal destination. However, that eternal wisdom could just as in Solomon's case become folly in our lives, if it rests solely on ourselves and our perceptions. That is why we must learn, as we so easily try to forget, that all our power to seek God at all, is really a gift of His amazing grace. That Godliness is foreign to us as created creatures. But thanks be to God that the requirement of God's holiness was paid in full by the Son of God, Jesus Christ. We therefore must rest in that grace and live in His grip.

Our latest Chronicles:

Plaid Hood, Tall and Strong, circa 2020; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/plaidhood2-22-6.pdf>

Thesis Seven: Indulgences; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisseven3-1-6.pdf>

The Nature Deficit Divide; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/naturedeficit3-8-6.pdf>

Birds & Snakes; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/birdsnsnakes3-15-6.pdf>

Given Gifts; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/givengifts4-12-6.pdf>

Our rights and our dusty responsibility; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/rightrespon4-19-6.pdf>