

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series: Exposition of Romans  
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### TRANSFORMED BY WISDOM

Wisdom, in our day and time, seems to be in short supply. Too often wisdom is associated with a course of action that brings personal happiness or guarantees results from some venture we have embarked upon. Biblical wisdom is connected with knowledge and, in fact, is dependent upon it. The Bible assumes that God's people will advance in their knowledge of God's Word and calls upon us to actively pursue wisdom in our service to God. Most of the book of Proverbs is devoted to the theme of wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Pro. 9:10).<sup>1</sup> The apostle Paul declares "We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (I Cor. 1:23-25). James Boice tells us that there are two parts to this wisdom: (1) its content, centered in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, and (2) the application of that content practically.<sup>2</sup> Paul's words in Rom. 12:1-2 underscore this same theme. A transformed mind is contrasted with one that is controlled and shaped by worldly thinking. Haldane, in his masterful work, described it this way: "We know," says the Apostle John, "that we are of God, and *the whole world* lieth in wickedness." By conformity to the world is meant assimilation to the people of the world; or the sentiments, conduct, and customs by which they are distinguished. It is the character of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they walk "according to the course of this world," acting conformably to those maxims which regard only the present life; and they "who mind earthly things" are described as the enemies of the cross of Christ; but the conversation of believers, as being pilgrims and strangers is in heaven. This prohibition, however, respects those things only that are sinful, and does not require singularity in the Christian in anything that is not contrary to the law of Christ. Pride may be indulged in the singularities of austerity, as well as in the imitation of fashionable folly. A sound Christian mind will have no difficulty in making the necessary discrimination on this subject."<sup>3</sup>

#### I. THE CAUTION

"Be very careful", BLEPETE, present tense imperative, lit. keep on being on the alert, take heed, be aware (comp. Col. 4:7; Phil. 3:2; 1 Cor. 3:10); AKRIBOS, lit. Accurately, carefully (cf. Mt. 2:8; Lk. 1:3). Paul groups these two very strong words together to re-enforce the urgent necessity for caution. There is need for precise or strict calculating in how we live. The stakes are high and carelessness and neglect must be avoided.

"...how you live", PERIPATEITE, lit. to walk. The word trans. "how" is POS, meaning "in what manner." "This can only be obeyed if believers take care that their conduct is characterized by wisdom. The mere exhortation is not simply 'walk/live as wise people' but its importance and urgency are reinforced by the use of both BLEPETE 'watch' and AKRIBOS 'carefully'."<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE CONTRAST

“...not as unwise”, ASOPHOI, lit. no wisdom, lacking understanding and insight, “but as wise”, SOPHOI, just the opposite of unwise. “Paul often uses the word SOPHIA for divine truth. The SOPHOI are those who possess this truth, which he had called light, and the ASOPHOI are those who have it not.”<sup>5</sup> The believer has as a result of the new birth the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has an entirely different “world-view”, a different attitude towards life (cf. II Cor. 5:17).

## III. THE CALCULATION

“...making the most of every opportunity”, EXAGORAZOMENOI, present tense participle, used in the imperative sense. Related to the EXAGORAZO (cf. Gal 3:13; 4:4; Col. 4:5), to buy up in the market place, used here in the sense of seizing the opportunity; “redeeming the time” is a good lit. trans., “but not in the sense of making up for lost time, as in the words ‘Redeem thy misspent time that’s past.’”<sup>6</sup> The word speaks to things that come our way, i.e., snap up every opportunity that comes along.

## IV. THE CAUSE

“...because the days are evil.” Simply read Paul’s description in Rom. 1:18-32 to see how evil the day was, and things haven’t gotten any better. The nature of man and the schemes of the devil haven’t changed for the better. The Apostle expressly warned about the evil of the days to come in II Tim. 3:1-7.

## V. THE COMMAND

“Therefore do not be foolish.” This expression in the text lit. reads, “Stop becoming foolish.” The word “foolish” is APHRON, without sense, lacking the ability to think. “...but understand what the Lord’s will is.” The word “understand” is SUNIETE, present imperative. It refers to the ability to bring things together and see them in relation to one another. In other words, it stresses the role of “sanctified” reasoning! What are they to “understand”? “The Lord’s will.” What does this refer to? The secret decree? No. The will of God for me as an individual: that is, where am I to live, what job am I to do and related questions? Is this what Paul had in mind? No. The Apostle has exhorted his readers to “walk as children of light...and to find out what pleases the Lord.” It is the MORAL will of God as revealed in Scripture that Paul has in mind (comp. Heb. 5:14).

**CONCLUSION:** Adolphe Monod was one of the great Reformed ministers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He was, in fact, the foremost preacher in all of France. Stricken with a fatal illness while a relatively young man, he penned on his deathbed a remarkable little book simply titled *Adolphe Monod’s Farewell*. Five of 25 chapters dealt with the theme ‘A Dying Man’s Regrets’ – one of which addresses the use of time. “One of the things which trouble the Christian who thinks his end is near, or would trouble him if he were not at the foot of the cross, is the manner in which he has employed his time.” Monod then proceeds to give the following three important considerations. (1) We must be pervaded by the thought that we do not belong to ourselves, and therefore our time is not ours, anymore than the rest of what we have. (2) Since our time belongs to God, we must always be diligent in seizing the opportunities which God holds out to us. In order to do this, we must have our eyes constantly opened and turned towards God – if our attention is diverted, we will become preoccupied with our own petty interests. (3) We must go about our lives methodically and thoughtfully, in other words, our minds must be sanctified and we must serve God acceptably.<sup>7</sup> This is what it means to walk in wisdom.

## **ENDNOTES**

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- <sup>1</sup> "Proverbs is a book about wisdom and its application to human life. The Hebrew word *hokma*, "wisdom," refers broadly to some skill or expertise, a natural endowment that one may possess intelligence of a most general kind. It seems, moreover, to be used more technically in the Book of Proverbs for what can be acquired by instruction (see 21:11) or by observation of one's world (see 6:6-8)." W.J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament* (Baker, 1988), p. 223.
- <sup>2</sup> J.M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1988), p. 185.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Haldane, *An Exposition of Romans* (rpt. MacDonald, 1958) p. 556
- <sup>4</sup> A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians: Word Biblical Commentary* (Word, 1990), p. 341.
- <sup>5</sup> C. Hodge, *Commentary On the Epistle to the Ephesians* (rpt. Revell, 1978), p. 299.
- <sup>6</sup> J.A. Robinson, *Commentary On Ephesians: Exposition of the Greek Text* (rpt. Kregel, 1979), p. 120.
- <sup>7</sup> *Adolphe Monod's Farewell* trans, Owen Thomas (rpt. The Banner of Truth, 1962), pp. 70-74.