

Wisdom of God vs Wisdom of Men

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[0 : 0 0] For those of you who are visiting, my name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. I have the privilege of preaching from God's Word on most Sundays, and I do follow the text pretty closely.

So if you don't have a Bible in your hands now, I do encourage you to grab one and follow along with me. It was Socrates, I think, that once said, the only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.

And similarly, Leo Tolstoy said, we can know only that we know nothing, and that is the highest degree of human wisdom. Many wise people throughout the ages seem to have come to that conclusion that the more we know, the more we grasp the vastness of our ignorance.

And 1 Corinthians 3, 18 to 19 take this one step further. It says, Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. In this passage that we're looking at, Jeremiah 8, 4 to 10, 25, we see God's people seeking wisdom in all the wrong places.

[1 : 2 0] And they, in error, think that they are very wise because of the wisdom of men that they have obtained. And Jeremiah tells them, and this is the main point of this passage, that we should seek the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of men.

And that's what he tells them to do. First, we're going to talk about the wisdom of lying men, and then we'll talk about the wisdom of idolatrous men. And then thirdly, we'll talk about the wisdom of the true God.

Verses 4 to 5 of chapter 8, it says this, It's a very sharp and pointed accusation here because when you're walking along the road, let's say out on Cambridge Street here, and you trip and fall, right, you will naturally pick yourself back up from the ground and start walking again.

In the same way, if you're driving around the streets and you take a wrong turn, you naturally turn yourself around and get back on the right road. That's the natural course of things.

You don't keep going in the wrong direction, yet this is exactly what God's people were not doing. They were refusing to return. They were turning away in perpetual backsliding, even though they see that their ways are not working, even though they see that it is wrong, it is in error.

[2 : 4 3] They keep doing it, repeating the same sins over and over again. And this stubborn refusal to repent and to return to God looks even more ridiculous when you compare it to the natural course of creation.

Look at verses 6 to 7 of chapter 8. I've paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly. No man relents of his evil, saying, What have I done?

Everyone turns to his own course like a horse plunging headlong into battle. Even the stork in the heavens know her times. And the turtle dove swallow and crane keep the time of their coming.

But my people know not the rules of the Lord. Even the birds of the air know their times and when to migrate according to their God-given intuitive sense of the seasons.

But God's people knew not the rules of the Lord. They were instead like these horses plunging headlong into battle who seemed to care not that these swords and these arrows are coming their way.

[3 : 44] And in spite of the plain foolishness of their refusal to repent, God's people are under the delusion that they are wise. God says to them in verses 8 to 9, How can you say we are wise and the law of the Lord is with us?

But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. The wise men shall be put to shame. They shall be dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord.

So what wisdom is in them? Even though they had rejected the word of the Lord by their disobedience, they wrongly believed that just because the law of the Lord was in their possession, that they were wise.

But having a book on a shelf, of course, doesn't mean that you have read it and applied its contents to your life. The same way, the people who have having the law of God means nothing if they are not applying it and living by the word.

And so this is the first kind of wisdom we see in these chapters. And these men style themselves as being wise. It's the wisdom of lying men who pay lip service to the law of God without actually listening to it.

[4 : 46] Therefore, God announces his punishment in verses 10 to 12. And verse 11, it says, From prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.

They have healed the wound of my people, lightly saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. Instead of warning sinful people of impending judgment, these prophets and priests assure them with false security.

Instead of preaching a message of repentance, they were preaching a message of complacency. Minimizing people's sins and healing their wounds lightly. And we often deceive ourselves in the same way.

We rationalize our sins. We minimize our sins. We deny our sins altogether. We say, Oh, that's not really a sin. Even if it is, it's a really small one.

A minor one that I don't really need to worry about. It's so much better than that person's sin. Yeah, maybe I shouldn't do that. But look around. Everybody does it. It can't be so bad.

[5 : 51] By minimizing the sins of God's people and diverting their attention from God's imminent judgment, these so-called prophets and priests were dealing falsely with them and turning the very word of the Lord into a lie.

In what ways are we at risk of turning the word of the Lord into a lie? Is your life defined by the word of God? Is it shaped by the word of God?

2 Timothy 3.15 It says that the sacred scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Do you cherish this word as the unique writing that can make us wise unto salvation? Or is the word of God an afterthought, a footnote to your life, which is defined primarily by the trends and ideas and habits of the surrounding world?

Do you submit yourself to the word of God or do you subject the word to your own will? Does the word ever contradict or challenge you? Or does it always seem to echo whatever you think and feel at the time?

[7 : 03] Because if that's the case, then you're probably not submitting to the word, but instead conforming it to your own will. We need to make sure that we're not passing off the wisdom of lying men as the wisdom of God by passing, you know, by paying lip service to God without really listening to him.

So from chapter 8, verse 13, to chapter 9, verse 6, there's a kind of a back and forth between God's speech and Judah's speech and Jeremiah's speech and so on. And it's not always clear who the speaker is, so we have to pay attention to the context to determine who's speaking.

And so in verse 13, it's God speaking again, says, declares the Lord. He's once again comparing Judah to a vine that he planted, but he notes that there are no grapes in the vine when he comes to pick the grapes to enjoy.

And then in verses 14 to 15, we see Judah's desperate response to God's judgment. And then God announces in verses 16 to 17 that the invaders of the north are now at hand. They've come upon them.

Up to this point in the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah has been calling people to repentance in order to avoid God's judgment, so that God's judgment might be averted. But now judgment has come. So we're entering into a different phase of the book.

[8 : 11] And in chapter 8, verses 18 to 19, Jeremiah begins his own lament and mourning. He says, My joy is gone. Grief is upon me. My heart is sick with me.

Behold the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land. Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her king not in her? Then the Lord replies, Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?

It's an interesting dialogue. The people of Judah are asking among themselves, Is God really with us as he promised he would be? If that's the case, then why are all these bad things happening to us? And then God's answer is, If you really say that I am your God, then what are all these idols that I see in your land?

Because they have not been faithful to him. And then they utter this hopeless saying, The harvest is past. The summer is ended. And we are not saved.

In Israel, the wheat harvest lasted from April to June. And when the wheat harvest failed, they had to put their hope in the summer fruits, like figs and olives and grapes, to sustain them.

[9 : 17] But if the summer fruits also failed, then that would mean that they would probably starve. They would have famine in their hands. And that's why this expression became a popular way of describing a dire situation, a hopeless situation.

The harvest is past. The summer is ended. And we are not saved. So they're saying, in essence, there's no sight of deliverance from God's judgment. And seeing this hopeless situation, Jeremiah pours out his heartfelt lament.

He says, For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded. I mourn. And dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored? He calls God's people my daughter.

He says, My daughter of the daughter of my people. Grammatically, he's probably referring to the daughter that is my people. He's calling God's people his daughter. That's how intimately he relates to them and feels for them.

[10 : 22] And then we see an interesting paradox of emotions from Jeremiah. Look at chapter 9, verse 1. First, in chapter 9, verse 1, he mourns the suffering of his people. He says, Oh, that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.

He's mourning the suffering of his people. But then in chapter 9, verse 2, he mourns the sins of his people that brought about their suffering. He says, Oh, that I had in the desert a traveler's lodging place that I might leave my people and go away from them for they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men.

It's difficult for Jeremiah to stand both the destruction and the degradation of Jerusalem and the people of Judah. So he wishes that he could withdraw to a lodge in the wilderness away from the sin and suffering of the people.

And this is helpful. It's instructive to us because it's important to recognize that a healthy prophetic ministry, when we're trying to speak into people's lives in a prophetic way, that we need to have both of these responses that we're seeing in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah has both, on the one hand, a zeal for God's holiness. And on the other hand, he has a love for God's people. He mourns Judah's suffering even while he is pronouncing God's judgment over them.

[11 : 44] So sometimes we can wrongly, you know, kind of enjoy and relish these prophetic confrontations. You know, whether it's a Christian journalist who specializes in publishing church scandals and conflicts, or whether it's a Bible-thumping pastor who preaches fire and brimstone without grace and mercy, or maybe a simply a self-righteous church member who is in the habit of confronting other members about their sins and errors without first examining his own heart.

All of these instances, people are loving to point out sins and failures to people without loving the people themselves. They denounce the sins of God's people with glee rather than grief.

Their so-called prophetic ministry stems not from love, but from their own insecurities, and it's a way of lifting themselves up and putting others down rather than building others up.

A true prophet of the Lord must be filled with both a passion for God's glory and a compassion for God's people. It's a little sudden, but then God interjects at this point with his own assessment of the evils of his people in verse 3.

It says, the fact that God's speech begins here is indicated by the phrase declares the Lord again at the end of the verse, and he says, and he refers to himself in the first person that they do not know me. And verses 3 to 4 and verses 5 to 6 are mirror images of each other.

[13 : 09] They kind of form a coherent poetic unit. And so verse 3 speaks of how people speak falsehood and proceed from evil to evil and do not know the Lord. And that parallels verse 6, which speaks of how the people heap oppression upon oppression and deceit upon deceit and refuse to know the Lord.

And likewise, verse 4, which speaks of how no one should trust his neighbor. And then it parallels verse 5, which speaks of how everyone deceives his neighbor. So throughout this entire section, there's been this focus on sins of deception, right?

Lying about God and lying to one another. And this passage, this unit here, tells us what that stems from. That deceptive tongue comes from not knowing God.

Look at Numbers 23, 19. It says, God is not man that he should lie or is not man that he should change his mind. Has he said and will he not do it? Or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it?

One of the things that separate God from man is that he never lies and always fulfills his promises. So not surprisingly then, for people who do not know the God who cannot lie, people who do not know the God whose word is truth, their speech deteriorate into falsehood.

[14 : 23] And earlier in chapter 8, verse 8, God spoke of the lying pen of the scribes that are turning, making the law of the Lord into a lie. And these so-called wise ones were twisting and manipulating God's word to their liking, right?

And that's what naturally happens. If you don't take God at his word, we're going to turn to other sources and really the only other alternative is the wisdom of lying men. If we're not shaped by God's word, we will shape the realities and bend the truth according to man's wisdom, according to our own will.

If we do not know the Lord, if we're not committed to his commandments and his will, then we're going to lie to one another because our ultimate allegiance is not to God but to ourselves.

And when we're seeking to advance our own agendas, when we're seeking to make ourselves look good, then there's no more powerful weapon than the tongue. So chapter 9, verse 8 says, Their tongue is a deadly arrow.

It speaks deceitfully. With its mouth, each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart, he plans an ambush for him. These are military terms that vividly portray the dangers of the tongue.

[15 : 28] And rarely do Christians, you know, our Christians, at least I've seen, guilty of straight-up libel, right? Saying something maliciously and intentionally bad about somebody that's made up and false.

More often, I think, we are tempted to twist people's words, right? How often have you read articles or emails or heard people say things that include these hasty and rash conclusions and judgments about what other people are saying that does not give them a fair hearing?

It's a subtle way of acting like we're engaging in fair debate but whilst actually damaging that person's reputation and credibility by twisting their words and attributing things to them that they didn't really say.

It's a way of speaking peace but planning an ambush, right? This might help us win arguments but it's a form of hatred of our neighbors. Lying can also take the form of gossip and slander.

How often do we baptize gossip and slander with Christian lingo? By prefacing it with an expression of reluctance. I've known this for a long time but I've held it to myself all along.

[16 : 41] Or by couching it in terms of our own struggles. I've really been struggling with so and so. Would you please give me some counsel? Or by sugarcoating it.

Sugarcoating the slander by appending a trumpet of praise at the end. Even though I've said all these bad things about this person, she's really a great person after all. It's all gossip and slander with different masks.

It's a way of speaking peace but planning an ambush. And even if the gossip or a slanderer is telling what he or she believes to be true, the context in which it is presented where only one side is heard, where the other person is being picked apart in minute detail without a chance to defend him or herself, that context is deceitful because by nature the truth that is presented will be partial.

And the people of Judah were doing this and more. They were bending their tongue like a bow because they did not know the Lord. And Jeremiah says, every brother was a deceiver and every neighbor went about as a slanderer.

Everyone deceived his neighbor and no one spoke the truth. They had taught their tongue to speak lies, heaping deceit upon deceit. That's the inevitable consequence of not knowing God and being held accountable to him in our daily lives.

[18 : 03] We will bend our tongues like a bow to conquer people and control them. That's the wisdom of lying men. And Jeremiah teaches us that we should seek the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of man.

Then in chapter 9, verse 12, the theme of wisdom comes up again. It says, Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the Lord spoken that he may declare it?

The false prophets and priests claim to be wise, but those who are truly wise are those to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken. But there's none to be found in Jeremiah's time.

Only wisdom that people of Judah have is the wisdom of idolatrous men, and that's the second point. And verse 14, it says that the people have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals.

That's the idolatry is the focus of this next section. And after pronouncing his judgments once again, God says this in verses 17 to 19. Consider and call for the mourning woman to come, sent for the skillful woman to come.

[19 : 09] Let them make haste and raise a wailing over us that our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids flow with water. For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion. How we are ruined.

We are utterly shamed because we have left the land because they have cast down our dwellings. The impending judgment is so severe that God calls for the mourning woman.

That's a reference to professional mourners common in the Middle East even today. They are, you know, they have this signature high shriek, you know, mourning that they use to follow behind the funeral beers.

And their point, their really purpose is they're hired to stir the emotions of people so that people can express the sadness appropriately according to what has happened. And these mourning women are interestingly described as the skillful women.

And the word skillful is the same word that's translated throughout these chapters as wise. It's the same word. So it's ironic that the priests and prophets, these men that God has appointed to lead, they're all false and they're lying and they claim to be wise and they're not wise.

[20 : 14] In fact, the only ones that are wise in this nation are these mourning women. They're the only ones that know the truth because they're mourning and that's what these people should be doing because God's judgment is at hand.

And so God instructs these women further in verse 20, Hear, O woman, the word of the Lord and let your ear receive the word of his mouth. Teach to your daughters a lament and each to her neighbor a dirge.

Right? Those who are wise are those to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken and God says to the woman here, Let your ear receive the word of his mouth what Jeremiah says to God about God.

So those who have, these are the women, it's not those who are married in Judah who are wise, who have heard from the Lord, but it's those who are mourning in Judah that are wise. This is a helpful, there's a helpful parallel in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 4.

It says, The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. The fool lives like he will never die and make decisions for the here and now without thinking about death and the afterlife.

[21 : 24] The fool is always merry and enjoying life without paying heed to the brokenness of this world and the sorrows and sufferings of humanity. But the wise person on the other hand lives knowing that he will one day die and makes provisions not only for the here and now but also for his death and afterlife.

The wise one does not go from entertainment to entertainment, diversion to diversion, vacation to vacation, trying to escape the sad realities of life. They pay attention to the sorrows and sufferings of humanity and work to heal the brokenness of this world.

Do you mourn the sins and sufferings in your own lives and the lives of those around you? Do you mourn the judgment that faces humanity because of their sins against God?

There's no wisdom apart from recognizing these realities. The repeated descriptions of Judah's sins and God's judgments in Jeremiah are here in Scripture not to depress you but to make you wise, wise unto salvation.

It's an aspect of the wisdom of God. In verse 21, God gives the reason why these women ought to mourn. He says, For death has come up into our windows.

[22 : 41] It has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares. This is an unusual personification of death and it may be an allusion to a Canaanite myth that was known to the people of Judah.

According to Canaanite mythology, Baal is kind of the supreme god in their pantheon and he defeated the god of chaos and the sea, Yam, and after defeating Yam, he became a king and built for himself this grand palace.

And as his architect was building the palace, the architect suggested to him, You should put a window in your palace. And Baal says, No, I'm not going to put a window in case these enemy gods see through and see what's inside.

But then later, without any more prompting from the architect, he reverts back to it and says, Okay, yeah, let's put a window. That sounds like a good idea. He puts a window on the palace and sure enough, right afterward, the god of death, Mot, whose name in Hebrew, Mot, also is the Hebrew word for death, invades and he kills Baal.

And he's left for dead in the fields. And that's, this may be an allusion to that. It's a satirical remark on the story because it says, For death has come up into our windows.

[23 : 56] It has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares. God's saying, basically, the Baal you worship is powerless to save you. Even in your own stories, Baal can't save himself.

Death will come up into your windows and palaces. And verse 22, the dead bodies of men shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves after the reaper and none shall gather them.

The wisdom of idolatrous men will prove unreliable. Then after a brief statement on the nature of true wisdom in verses 23-26, which I will return to later, God continues to denounce the idolatry of his people in chapter 10, verses 1-16.

First, he mocks their idols in verses 2-5. Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens, because the nations are dismayed at them.

For the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold. They fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move.

[25 : 03] Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field and they cannot speak. They have to be carried for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

It's absurd to worship an idol that we have created with our own hands. An idol that can't do anything for itself that we have to carry around and fasten up on the walls.

Even the birds quickly figure out that motionless scarecrows can't do anything to them. They're pretty ineffective. The scarecrows just still and doesn't do anything. So why should we fear these idols that can do neither good nor evil?

Then in verses 6-10, Jeremiah contrasts these idols with the Lord God. He says, There is none like you, O Lord. You are great and your name is great in might.

Who would not fear you, O king of the nations? For this is your due. For among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you. They are both stupid and foolish.

[26 : 11] The instruction of idols is but wood. Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz. They are the works of the craftsmen and the hands of the goldsmith. Their clothing is violet and purple.

They are all the work of skilled men. But the Lord is the true God. He is the living God and the everlasting king. At his wrath the earth shakes and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

He continues in verses 11-12, The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens. It is he who made the earth by his power who established the world by his wisdom and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

Once again, I hope you're catching following the theme of wisdom continuing in this passage. The people who lead the worship of idols are called the wise ones of the nations. And these idols are described as the work of skilled men.

Once again, same word, the wise men. But no matter how creative and beautiful their craftsmanship, the products they produce are just wood, silver, and gold, inanimate objects.

[27 : 19] So Jeremiah says that these idols that they worship and the people who worship them are both stupid and foolish. The idols are false, they are dead, and they are temporary.

But Jeremiah says the Lord is the true God, the living God, and the everlasting King, and it's he alone who established the earth, established the world by his wisdom.

There's no wisdom to be found in the idolatries of the nation, so don't be dismayed by them, God is saying. Only the Lord is the source of true wisdom. The power, wisdom, and understanding of the Lord stands in stark contrast to the powerlessness and the foolishness and ignorance of the idols.

It's really easy for us at this point to kind of brush this aside and as irrelevant, you know, these relics of the primitive past because we don't worship idols nowadays, in our days, and we could think that these people really were foolish, but in his book, Counterfeit Gods, Pastor Tim Keller helpfully defines idols in this way.

He says, Is there something in your life that is more important to you than God?

[28 : 54] And I'm not talking just theoretically here, but functionally, because of course, most of us as Christians, we would say, God is the most important person in my life. He is the most important thing in my life. But really, functionally, experientially, is He the most important thing in your life?

Do your life's purposes and priorities have God at the center? Or is something else occupying that center? Is there anything in your life besides God?

Should you lose it today, it would make you devastated, make your life not worth living. Return with me to chapter 9, verses 23 to 24.

Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. The things that we boast in other than God all, in some sense, become our idols.

[30 : 10] And so interesting, right, in our high school days, right, we had nerds, the jocks, and the preps, right? And apparently when you become adults, things don't change very much because here we say the wise man boasts in his wisdom, the mighty man boasts in his might, the rich man boasts in his riches, the intellectuals and academics, the athletes, the rich and the famous, in so many ways, these are still the very same things that people nowadays aspire to and idolize.

And there's so many variations and degrees of these idols. Do you feel that life is only worth living if you have a certain quality of life and a set of pleasures at your disposal? That's the idolatry of comfort and pleasure.

Do you feel that life is only worth living if I am loved and respected by so and so? That's the idolatry of man's work.

Do you feel that life is only worth living if I am highly efficient and productive in what I do? That's the idolatry of work. Do you feel that life is only worth living if I am successful and accomplished?

That's the idolatry of achievement. Do you feel that life is only worth living if I am wealthy and own these nice things? That's the idolatry of money and materialism. Do you feel that life is only worth living if your political cause or your social cause is making progress and growing in power and influence?

[31 : 43] That's the idolatry of ideology. Do you feel that life is only worth living if you are loved by the right person or marry the right person? That's the idolatry of relationship.

And how are these idols any different from the handmade idols of Judah? These idols cannot save us. These idols cannot satisfy us.

They are false, lifeless, and fleeting. But the Lord is the true God. He's the living God and the everlasting King.

True wisdom is not found in the idolatries of men but in God. And that's why Jeremiah tells us that we should seek the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of men. So at this point if you're convinced for the need for God's wisdom it raises the question how do we find it?

That brings us to the final point of the sermon. Wisdom of the true God. In order to access the wisdom of God we must get to know God as it's said in 23 and 24 of chapter 9.

[32 : 54] But what does it mean to know God? It's not it's not necessarily knowing about God because Israel also had that. Judah also had that. But then look at verse 23 of chapter 10 with me.

I know, O Lord that the way of man is not in himself that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord but in justice not in your anger lest you bring me to nothing.

Pour out your wrath on the nations that know you not and on the peoples that call not on your name for they have devoured Jacob. They have devoured him and consumed him and have laid waste his habitation.

So here at the end of chapter 10 Jeremiah is acknowledging that man is not the master of his own fate but God is and he affirms the hope that though God is disciplining his people right now through the judgment of the invading nations foreign nations that there will come a day when God will rescue his people and judge these nations who know him not.

And it was a commonly held view among God's people in Judah that it was the nations not they who truly deserve God's judgment. In fact the word nations itself was kind of it became a way when God's people distinguished themselves and distanced themselves from the rest of the nations.

[34 : 09] They are the nations. We are Israel. We are Judah. We are God's special possession. But there's a problem.

It's true that the nations did not know God but it's also true that Judah did not know God. In chapter 8 verse 7 God declared my people know not the rules of the Lord.

And then in chapter 9 verse 3 and verse 6 God lamented that his people refused to know him. This is the heart of the problem. As I've mentioned throughout our series in Jeremiah knowing here knowing God here is not merely referring to intellectual knowledge but to a personal knowledge to relational knowledge to covenantal knowledge because people of Judah knew a lot of things about God but they were disloyal to him.

They were unfaithful to him and in that sense they did not know him. That's why in chapter 9 verses 25 to 26 follow along with me. Chapter 9 verses 25 to 26 God says this The days are coming when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh Egypt, Judah, Edom the sons of Ammon Moab and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair for all these nations are uncircumcised and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

This is a remarkable statement because God is including Judah God's including Israel among the list of these uncircumcised nations.

[35 : 43] And the reason for this is that though they are circumcised in their flesh that's inadequate that's external that's ritual they are not conforming to God in obedience therefore they are not circumcised in heart which is what they truly needed.

So in order to know God you must know him you must be circumcised in heart you must know him in the way he revealed himself to us and that is this in chapter 9 verse 24 God says I am the Lord who practices steadfast love justice and righteousness in the earth.

These are some of the most central aspects of God's character. God practices steadfast love toward us. God is loyal to his people even though we are fickle and disloyal.

He practices steadfast love rather than a love that changes with every circumstance. steadfast love here or elsewhere translated as loving kindness this conveys the idea of being magnanimous and gracious to someone even when such love is not deserved or expected.

That's the idea that's the word Hebrew word that's behind the New Testament words like grace and mercy. God is full of steadfast love toward us. But God does not merely practice steadfast love he also practices justice.

[37 : 04] The word justice refers to God's impartial and perfect judgment. God condemns evildoers and he acquits the innocent. He cannot be bribed he cannot be misled or fooled he knows all things and sees all things and therefore is uniquely qualified to judge.

Judgment can only be rendered by those who have the proper authority to do so and God is that ultimate authority over all of creation. He alone practices justice. And lastly God practices righteousness.

This word is related to the word justice and it's sometimes translated that way and righteousness points to the reality that God defines what is right. God defines what is just and human beings whom we call righteous or just are those that simply uphold God's just standard.

It's only those who are committed to righteousness that can execute justice and that's what God does. This is who God revealed himself to us to be.

So if we know these things about him and get to know him in this way is that enough? It's still not enough. It's great to know these characteristics of God.

[38 : 25] Knowing and believing these things will make us a good Jew but it will not make us a good Christian. These attributes of God are ultimately revealed and embodied and fulfilled in the coming of God's Son Jesus Christ.

And Paul quotes Jeremiah 9 23 to 24 and writes this in 1 Corinthians 18 to 31. Follow along with me. It's going to extend the passage that I read.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom it pleased God through the folly of what we preached to save those who believe.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[39 : 45] For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men for consider your calling brothers not many of you are wise according to worldly standards not many were powerful not many were of noble birth but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God and because of him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord notice how

Jeremiah takes the exact I mean Paul takes the exact categories that Jeremiah used wise let the wise not boast in their wisdom let not the strong boast in their strength let not the rich boast in their riches he takes those exact categories and says that we were not like that that's not the reason God saved us God saved us not on the basis of our wisdom our might or our riches but because of his steadfast love justice and righteousness God saves us this way to eliminate human boasting altogether and the way of salvation is through Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption this is how Jesus reveals those characteristics of God he reveals and embodies and fulfills the steadfast love of God because in spite of decades and centuries even millennia of persistent sin and rebellion against him God never abandoned his commitment to his people and the expression of his ongoing commitment to him is Lord Jesus

Christ whom he sends to save and redeem them his steadfast love and grace is revealed in Jesus Christ to us Jesus reveals the justice of God he's the one to whom the father has entrusted all judgment he will separate those who humbly receive him from those who pridefully reject him and Jesus judges humanity in this way and he will do so with righteousness Jesus reveals the righteousness of God because he does not brush over our sins he does not sweep our sins under the rug but he deals righteously and justly with sinners because the righteousness of God must be upheld and his wrath against sinner must be meted out Jesus dies on the cross for our sins he absorbs the punishment he absorbs the wrath that we deserved and rises again so that he might absolve us free us redeem us from sin and death in short

Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God that we must seek and in order to seek him in order to receive him you must forsake all wisdom of man this is a hard message because it requires that we give up all our pretensions and pride this is a hard message because I face that temptation every week to tell people what they want to hear people don't like hearing the gospel it looks foolish to them I know that yet we do it because that's the wisdom of God that makes foolish the wisdom of man because it is the only thing because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation because as we sang earlier there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved except the name of

Jesus Christ so let me ask you is there anything that you are boasting in other than Jesus today your power your riches your wisdom your intelligence your looks is your confidence for salvation in yourself or your own wisdom your own philosophical system your own morality or your own good works or is it in the cross of Jesus Christ let the one who boasts boast in the Lord let's reflect on that in silence for a moment and then we'll respond to that by praying out loud together as the body and door into the noise of air and leads to songs