

Divine Longings Over the Foolish.

Horatius Bonar:

"If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!" — Deuteronomy 32:29

These are the words, not of anger, but of love, of disappointed affection, of a sorrowful friend, of a tender-hearted father, of an earnest, gracious, patient God. In these words God yearned over Israel. In them He still yearns over us. In them we learn the attitude in which God is standing over us, all the day stretching out His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

I. GOD'S DESIRE TO MAKE US WISE. Himself the infinitely wise God, He longs to make us partakers of His wisdom. He has no pleasure in our ignorance; no, it excites His compassion as much as His displeasure. He knows the preciousness of wisdom, and He loves not to see us without it. He wishes us to be wise. Why then does He not make us so, seeing He is as powerful as He is wise? I cannot explain this whole puzzle, it is inscrutable. Only let us remember,

- (1.) That He is sovereign as well as loving;
- (2.) That wisdom, from its very nature, cannot be forced;
- (3.) That the power of a human will for evil, for resistance both to wisdom and to love, is very great, far greater than can be supposed from the feebleness of the creature in whom it is.

We cannot disentangle the whole knot, but we know from His own words that He desires sincerely and honestly, to see us wise. What else can our text mean — "Oh, that they were wise." Is not this good news? God desires to make you wise! If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.

II. MAN'S UNTEACHABLENESS. The wish to be wise and the unwillingness to be taught is one of the many strange contradictions of humanity. The search for wisdom and the rejection of it when God presents it, is a strange spectacle, but not quite unaccountable. For the wisdom man searches for is wisdom of his own selecting; it is wisdom without God, it is wisdom which will not contradict his sinful propensities and lusts, it is wisdom reasoned out by himself and according to himself the credit of discovery.

Submission to divine tuition is what he specially dislikes; liberty to take or reject God's instruction is what he claims for himself, and the present age is developing man's unteachableness to the full. He claims to be his own teacher, and to be the judge of the wisdom which he is to receive. He insists that his own reason, his own conscience, his moral sense, shall sit in judgment on all that is presented to him. The authoritative presentation to him of any doctrine he holds to be inconsistent with his liberty, and therefore even when he receives the doctrine thus presented, he rejects the authority on which it comes; he may receive the truth, but it is because his own reason has proved it or accepted it, not because God has offered it. He would have his faith to stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God.

III. GOD'S PROVISION FOR OUR BECOMING WISE. He has not left us to gather wisdom at random, nor contented Himself with the mere expression of a wish that we should be wise. He has given substantial proof of His sincerity in this thing. He has provided,

(1.) The **LESSON.** This book of his contains that lesson. It is full, varied, complete, simple. It is a lesson for learned and unlearned, for Jew and Greek, for rich and poor — the same lesson for all. In this one book is written the lesson of lessons; the lesson which, when learned, removes darkness, ignorance, disquietude; and gives light, peace, health, and an eternal salvation.

(2.) The **SCHOOL.** It is the school of Christ. For our first step is to become His disciples, to accept Him and His rules for the guidance of our studies. "Make disciples of all nations" was His commission. So we enter His academy, we enroll among His scholars. This discipleship is the first step to wisdom, it is the renunciation of the false schools, of the world, of man, of philosophy, and the submission of our whole man to the regulations of this school.

(3.) The **DISCIPLINE.** It is not simply pouring in information that is required. The mind, the soul, the conscience must be so disciplined and prepared as to receive it aright. Various is this discipline, this training. Hardship, sorrow, trial — all kinds of chastisement are required in order to fit us for the reception of the wisdom. In this divine school all these are brought into use, daily use, to make us receptive, pliable, teachable, submissive.

(4.) The **TEACHER.** He is the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we are said to "learn of Christ" and to "learn of the Father," but the Spirit is the special teacher; "he shall teach you all things;" "who teaches like him." His teaching is

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perfect, irresistible, yet not miraculous; gradual, natural, yet supernatural. He teaches us out of that book which he has inspired.

Thus God yearns over us, grieving at our ignorance, mourning over our unteachableness, offering to teach us, to make us wise. Thus pitying us, He provides for us; leaving us inexcusable if we remain untaught. Oh that you were wise, He says to each one of us— sincerely does He say it. Let us place ourselves entirely in His hands for instruction, for light, for blessing. All He asks is that we enroll ourselves as His scholars and submit to His teaching. In His infinite compassion and love He beseeches us to be wise.