

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,
Message # 22 – “God is Wise in Counsel”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School
Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 29th, 2017.**

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 -

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

Job 38: 36 - “Who has put wisdom in the mind?” “Or who has given understanding to the heart?”

Job 32: 1-9 – “So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused. So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: "I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, 'Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.' But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, Nor do the aged always understand justice.”

These verses confirm for us that wisdom is a communicable attribute of God. And Job needed wisdom, but at this point in the discussion with his friends and his acquaintances he didn't think that he needed counsel from anyone else. He wanted to hear from God. But he would have to wait for that. His friends had ceased answering him because they couldn't get him to accept their reasons why these terrible things had happened to him. They thought it was because he had sinned in some terrible secret way and was not confessing it. Elihu, a younger man, had waited to speak because he was younger. He thought that the aged men would have more wisdom than he. But in this case it was not so. And so he thought that he would speak on God's behalf to try and encourage Job to wait and see the issue; how God would act in regard to all of these awful things that had happened to Job. It will be our wisdom, if we can do the same in regard to the most difficult situations in life that we face.

Job 36: 1-5 – “Elihu also proceeded and said: ‘Bear with me a little, and I will show you That there are yet words to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you. “Behold God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding.” The King James reads – “Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: He is mighty in strength and wisdom.”

What Job wanted more than anything else was for God to answer him and tell him why these things had happened to him; why it seem to him that God had become his enemy even though he knew himself to be righteous. He would eventually get the answers that he was looking for in regard to some of his questions. But God knew that Job had things to learn about how He goes about to rule and govern the world in righteousness. He knew that Job needed the wisdom of His counsel more than even the reason that these things had happened to him. Job needed to entrust Himself to His faithful creator and Redeemer in doing what was right in that situation, but this was so very hard when he was torn apart by loss and grief. Job knew that he was a man of integrity. And God knew Job was a man of integrity; a man who was blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. But Satan, behind the scenes was trying to disprove Job's integrity. Let us understand that God's wisdom in what He permits in the lives of His people is always intended to reprove the accusations of the Devil and to bring forth his

people as gold is refined in the fire. Even the holiest of men still have things to learn about God and His ways. God also knew that even as holy a man as Job was, He still needed to learn more about His ways. He needed to learn how to justify God even more than even his trying to justify himself in this horribly difficult situation which had come to him; that of losing his children, his possessions, and his health, not to mention the approval of his wife and his friends. God would use a younger man to begin His counsel to Job. This was Elihu. Elihu knew that there were more words yet to speak on God's behalf. "God is mighty, but He despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding."

John Gill says: "He is mighty in strength and wisdom, as there is a pleonasm, a redundancy in the expression, "mighty in strength", it denotes the abundance of His strength, that He is exceeding strong, superlatively and all expression so; and also strong in wisdom, His strength is tempered with wisdom, so that He cannot employ it to any bad purpose, or be guilty of any unrighteousness. Some men have strength, but not wisdom to make a right use of it; but God abounds as much in wisdom as in strength; He is the only wise and the all wise God, and therefore can do no injustice; and thus Elihu, as he promised, ascribes righteousness to his almighty Maker."

Joseph Caryl says: "There is a strength of wisdom in knowing and discerning; God is mighty strong in this wisdom, in this knowing, this discerning wisdom. The Lord is a God of knowledge, his actions are weighed; he knows our actions exactly, and he will weigh them to a grain, He knows our actions to the utmost. And as He knows our actions, so our intention; He knows our inside as well as our outside. Thus God is strong in wisdom, as wisdom consists in knowledge; and thus strong He is, He knows all things. First, the least things as well as the greatest; tis no burden, no distraction to God, to take notice of the smallest matters, even to the numbering of the hairs of our head. That's true greatness of knowledge, to know the least things and motions of the meanest creature. Secondly, He knows the most secret things; Secret things belong to God, (Deut. 29: 29) that is, God has secrets which he reserves to Himself, man cannot know them, man must not attempt to know them, such an attempt were insufferable intrusion. Now as God hath secrets of His own, which no man must meddle with, so He meddles with all our secrets, our secrets belong to God as well as His own; He knows the secrets of our hearts, He has a key to that Cabinet, and can unlock it, and look into it; we may lock men, one and other out of our hearts, but we cannot lock out God, He sees what's there, such is the strength of His knowing wisdom."

Application – God's Counsel is His Wisdom –

Jeremiah 32: 17-19 – "Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. 18 You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them—the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts. 19 You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings."

John Calvin on this verse: "He goes on with the same subject, for he expresses his wonder and admiration as to God's judgments. he first declares that God is great in counsel and great in work. By counsel, he understands the wisdom of God, which not only surpasses all our thoughts, but also absorbs them. And then he mentions the execution of his counsel, which affords evidences of that wisdom which appears to us. By the works of God we learn how great and how unequalled is his wisdom: for that in itself cannot be comprehended, nay, men could not have the least knowledge of it, except it were rendered conspicuous by works. The works of God then through their excellency are evidences of his immeasurable wisdom. For this reason and in this sense the Prophet calls God great in counsel and great in work."