

INTRODUCTION

In the bible, the word wisdom is used to mean many things, or many aspects of a thing.

In descriptions of God as our creator, it refers to the infinite knowledge by which God knew how to create and arrange all things.

In the case of Moses and of Daniel, who were students in foreign countries, it refers to the body of accumulated knowledge in those pagan cultures, with no reference to the one true God.

In the case of Bezalel and other craftsmen in the time of the Exodus, it refers to the high level of artistic ability necessary to fashion the furnishings of the tabernacle.

In the case of Solomon, it refers to something like intelligence or insight, by which Solomon could speak with unusual insight as a king, judge, biologist, architect, poet, and philosopher.

In the wisdom literature: Proverbs, Psalms, etc., it refers to the fear of the Lord by which a person shuns evil and follows God's commands.

In Paul's letters it often refers to the natural, intellectual system of the Graeco-Roman philosophers, which was antithetical to the true wisdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ; but also refers to the spiritual wisdom that God proclaims in the gospel, and works by His Holy Spirit in those who are born again.

So, as we look to understand this third item in the list of qualifications for deacons, we cannot assume we know what the apostles in Jerusalem meant by wisdom, what aspect of wisdom it was to which they were referring. And we do not want to make some mistake in this, so that we look for men with some aspect of wisdom that is not what quality is really needed for this office in the church.

As I have studied into this, however, I have found that what aspect of wisdom the apostles intended is not hard to see in the bible. It is the same sense in which our Lord Jesus is described as being filled with wisdom. Understanding that, we also can see the same quality described in other words in 1 Timothy 3, by which we know how to choose for the church deacons in the character of Christ---full of wisdom.

TEXT

Acts 6:3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

BODY

I. See Our Lord Jesus As Full of Wisdom

A. As shown in how His questions and answers astonished the teachers in the temple

1. Luke 2:40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.
2. Luke 2:46-47 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. (47) And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.
3. Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
4. notice that when the bible says our Lord Jesus was filled with wisdom, what He did was give surprisingly good answers to questions about the bible; He did not give wrong answers, but very, very good answers about what the Word of God says

B. As shown in that He is greater in wisdom even than Solomon

1. Luke 11:31 The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.
2. the aspect of Solomon's wisdom that our Lord Jesus references is what came out in his speech, which the queen of the south came so far to hear
3. notice that our Lord Jesus said in that regard He Himself is greater than Solomon

C. Let us admire Jesus of Nazareth!

1. He was astonishingly wise even as a boy
2. he continued to grow in wisdom, until
3. as a man, He was wiser than even King Solomon, previously the wisest man ever to live

D. Let us all hear Him, as the queen came from a far country to hear King Solomon

1. Solomon could speak of natural things with unmatched wisdom
2. but our Lord Jesus Christ has spoken to us of spiritual things with even greater wisdom
3. He has said, "Repent"
4. He has said, "Believe in me"
5. He has said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. See the First Deacon, Stephen, As Full of Wisdom

A. Not long before Stephen was chosen a deacon, our Lord Jesus had prophesied persecution, and promised to give wisdom for speaking

1. Luke 21:12-16 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. (13) But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. (14) Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; (15) for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. (16) You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.
2. notice that the wisdom is tied to the mouth, to speaking, as it was with Jesus Himself
3. the wisdom will be such that what they speak will be without fault, so that adversaries will not be able to resist

B. This prophesy was most prominently fulfilled in Stephen, the first deacon

1. Acts 6:9-10 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. (10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.
2. see that again the wisdom mentioned is shown in how Stephen spoke
3. see again that what Stephen spoke in wisdom left those disputing with him unable to resist, because there was nothing wrong in what Stephen was saying

III. See How That Wisdom Appears in Other Words in the Pastoral Epistles

A. Titus 2:7-8 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence [gravity], incorruptibility, (8) sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

1. see that Paul is exhorting Titus to speak in such a way that his speech cannot be condemned; opponents of the gospel will have nothing bad to say about him (nothing that's true)
2. that's the same thing described by "wisdom" in the case of Stephen from Acts 6
3. NKJV "reverence" is G4587 *semnotes*
 - a) NIV seriousness
 - b) ESV dignity
 - c) GEN, KJV gravity
4. here reverence or dignity or gravity is used by Paul the same way Jesus prophesied about wisdom, and the same way that prophecy was fulfilled in Stephen
5. we notice that term because it is very prominent in 1 Timothy 3 about deacons and their wives

B. 1 Tim 3:8 Likewise deacons must be reverent G4586 *semnos*

1. ESV dignified
2. GEN, KJV, ASV grave
 - a) not meaning morose
 - b) not meaning gloomy
3. see what comes right with grave: not doubletongued
4. to be chosen a deacon, a man should be full of wisdom, which will be shown in how he speaks; in his speech he will be dignified, reverent, grave. He will speak with gravity, indicating he is filled with wisdom; this will appear especially in that his speech is consistently true, not wavering according to who is listening.

C. 1 Tim 3:11 Likewise their wives must be reverent G4586 *semnos*

1. ESV dignified
2. TYN, GEN honest
3. KJV, ASV grave
4. see what comes right with grave: not slanderers
5. Her speech will be dignified, reverent, grave. She will speak with gravity. This will appear especially in that she does not accuse people of things; she does not say things she doesn't know to be true.

In light of what we have seen in the bible about Jesus and Stephen speaking as filled with wisdom, and of deacons and their wives being grave, as shown in their speech

- IV. Think Now About the Practical Matter of the Church Choosing Men to Be Deacons
- A. You think about a man in the church, considering whether he is rightly thought of a “full of wisdom.”
 - B. You are merciful and charitable, allowing that no Christian lives this life in sinless perfection; only our Lord Jesus has done that in this world
 - C. You do not require that the men in your church speak like the Lord Jesus or like Stephen, refuting every argument, answering every difficult question, expounding the scriptures powerfully, putting all adversaries to shame
 - D. But you consider the man’s way of speaking, as to whether or not it is like the Lord’s speech and Stephen’s speech in that
 - 1. it is true, not false
 - a) he might be mistaken sometimes
 - b) but he does not habitually lie
 - 2. it is weighty, not flippant
 - 3. it is serious, not frivolous
 - 4. what he says cannot rightly be criticized by any who want to make trouble, because his speech is consistently good
 - 5. his speech is consistently kind and gentle, not harsh
 - 6. his speech is consistently pure, not sometimes foul
 - E. You consider his wife’s speech in the same way
 - 1. a wife who accuses with her mouth, who gossips, who slanders, can set fires in the church that her husband could spend all his time trying to put out
 - 2. a deacon is chosen to handle things for the church, so the pastors are not distracted from their spiritual work; how backward if the man’s wife causes so much trouble in the church that the pastors spend all their time trying to deal with them
 - 3. a wife whose speech indicates she is full of wisdom is likely to be a tremendous help to her husband as he serves as a deacon
 - F. If you determine that there is a man, or more than one man, in the church whose gravity in speaking shows him to be full of wisdom; and that his wife is of that same character, you might nominate him for consideration as a deacon; and if he comes up for election, you could in good conscience cast your vote for him.
 - G. If you judge that a man, or his wife, does not show the gravity that the office of deacon requires, and if that man does come up for election, you would then in good conscience vote against his being made a deacon.
 - H. The judgment of the whole church would then be expressed in the vote of the majority, and the man would or would not be elected a deacon. We all trust that the Lord Jesus will be helping us by His Spirit in the process.

CONCLUSION

There is work, mostly of a physical nature, that is too important to be left undone. It must be done. But it shouldn't be left for the pastors to do, lest their spiritual work of prayer and the ministry of the word be neglected. So, the church has a great need for deacons. But for the church to choose men as deacons, they must be judged to be men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom, which will show itself in a man's grave speech, which is consistently truthful.

Call to Worship: Isaiah 40:3-5 - Roel

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-52

Sermon: "Deacons in the Character of Christ: Full of Wisdom" Acts 6:3; Luke 2:40; 1 Timothy 3:8-9

Benediction: Isaiah 40:28-31

Prelude: Trinity 207 "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" - Anna

Trinity 689 "One Day" - Anna

Trinity 148 "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People" - Allison

Trinity 188 "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" - Anna

Trinity 447 "Blessed Are the Undefined in Heart" - Anna

grave

sound speech that cannot be condemned

Jesus was about His Father's business

Titus 2:6-8 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. (7) In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, **gravity [G4587 *semnotes*]**, sincerity, (8) Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Vulgate: gravitatem

Geneva, KJV, ASV: gravity

Being grave has to do primarily with speech, and with speech being such that no fault can be found with it!