

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Wisdom and Knowledge

by Dan Trygg

“You are to instruct all the skilled craftsmen, whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom...”

Exodus 28:3

“Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as Yahweh had commanded Moses.”

Deuteronomy 34:9

“Give me now wisdom and knowledge, ...for who can rule this great people of Yours?’ ¹¹ God said to Solomon,

‘Because you had this in mind, ... ¹² wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you.’”

2 Chronicles 1:10-12

“Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore... ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.”

1 Kings 4:29,32-33

“The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.”

Isaiah 11:2

We have been looking at spiritual gifts. The first one we looked at was artisanship. It was the first example of a spiritual gift, presented in that fashion (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31). It described an endowment of ability which is attributed to the filling of the Spirit of God. Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are attributed to the Spirit's active presence in the life of these people. This is a particular subset of a larger category of spiritual gifts, ...the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. As we see from the above passages, the gifts of wisdom and knowledge had other applications, as well.

We should define these terms, before going any further. **The Hebrew word for “wisdom” is *chokmah*** (pronounced like *khōkmah*). ***It referred to an aptitude or ability in practical insight and skill.*** While the Greek word for “wisdom” referred to speculative knowledge, the emphasis of the Hebrew word is on unusual cleverness, shrewd creativity or practical application. **The focus of the word is not speculative, or about heady, academic ideas; it is about concrete expression. It is about the “know-how” and skill to get things successfully accomplished.**

Yāda’* is the Hebrew word for “knowledge” or “to know”.** Again, it is not just about facts and information for thought alone. It is to “learn or know by experience”. ***It is knowledge discovered through investigation, especially gained through curiosity and experimentation. For that reason, it is very personal, experiential and life-related. **Hebrew knowledge was not just academic, it was “life-related”.** It led to a larger understanding and perceptiveness, resulting in making differentiations and developing discernment. ***Knowledge was “insight”.*** Again, the practical nature of the Hebrew world view is seen here. ***The end point of discovery is to utilize what is learned.***

So, we saw that the Spirit filled the craftsmen with the practical skill and understanding to design and fashion the tabernacle and its furnishings. That is just one specific area of application of Spirit-endowed wisdom and insight. **The next time we see this idea of the Spirit filling someone to do something is in the enduement of wisdom upon Joshua to lead the congregation of Israel in place of Moses** (Deut. 34:9). God had told Moses, in Numbers 27:12-14, that he was about to die. Moses asked God to appoint a leader who would be like a shepherd to lead the people (vss. 16,17). Yahweh told him to take Joshua, a man *who already had the Spirit in him*, and lay hands upon him in the sight of the people and commission him to be the leader in his stead. Then, the text says, “and you shall give to him out from your glory (majesty, splendor, power) in order that the people may give heed to him” (vs. 20). The language is very similar to what had been said earlier about God taking from the Spirit that was upon Moses, and placing it upon the 70 elders of Israel, so that they could share in the burden of leadership with him, ...and when He did *that*, they all prophesied (Num. 11:15-17;24-29). Clearly, there was a spiritual transaction, an endowment of a spiritual gift, that came to those men, when God did that. Here, in Numbers 27, there seems to be a similar spiritual transaction. Deuteronomy 34:9 indicates that the result of this transaction was that Joshua was filled with the Spirit of wisdom, and therefore the people listened to him. **God gave Joshua a Spirit-empowered practical ability and skill to not only formulate wise plans, but also to convince people to follow his direction.** Note that Joshua already had been indwelt by the Spirit. The “filling of the Spirit with wisdom” was an additional apportionment of skill or enablement than what Joshua had known before. **Clearly, this was an example of the “spiritual gift of wisdom”, ...this time in equipping someone for leadership.**

This is also the setting for the next occurrence of this idea of God giving wisdom and knowledge as a gift. In 2 Chronicles 1, Solomon had recently become king. He worshipped and sought Yahweh, and the Lord graciously appeared to him. **God was pleased with Solomon's devotion and humility, and asked him what he might desire.** The king praised Yahweh for His faithfulness to His people, and to David his father, by establishing the kingdom, and placing David's son on the throne. Then ***he asked for wisdom and knowledge to govern the people***

God had placed in his care. God was pleased with his humility and self-lessness, and granted his request. In the parallel passage in 1 Kings 3, the evidence of this spiritual transaction was made visible in Solomon's treatment of the two prostitutes who were squabbling over their claim over their babies. One baby had died, and the mother of that child had switched her dead baby for the living child of the other woman. The way Solomon decided the case flushed out the false claimant and revealed the truth of the matter. When people heard of the case, "...they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice" (1 Kg. 3:28). In the following chapter, it summarized the nature of what God had done. He had given "Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore... He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish" (4:29,32-33). **Not only did God give Solomon great wisdom, and know-how with which to carry out his responsibilities of administering justice and leading the people (the gift of wisdom), but He also gave him this amazing breadth of mind and mental ability to learn and remember a vast array of information.** In addition, He became unusually gifted to be able to compose proverbs and songs. **He was able to answer questions on all sorts of subjects.** His fame spread throughout the known world, and people came from all over to hear his wisdom and knowledge (cf. vss. 30-31,34). The queen of Sheba was left breathless at his unusual wisdom and knowledge, ...and the resultant grandeur that accompanied and followed his gifts and the grace of God (1 Kg. 10:1-9).

Isaiah 11 describes the coming Messiah, the shoot from the stem of David, the sprout (*netser*) from his roots. He will have the Spirit of Yahweh resting upon Him. Interestingly, in this description of the Spirit, He is referred to as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and the reverence of Yahweh" (vs. 2). **Wisdom, understanding and knowledge are descriptive of the Holy Spirit.** They are part and parcel of who He is and what He does. **Gaining insight, making skillful determinations, and discerning savvy ways of solving problems or getting things accomplished are all part of what He is capable of doing in any of us.** We see, throughout the scriptures, that **we are encouraged to seek for knowledge and to ask for wisdom.** God stores up wisdom for the upright, and delights to give it to those who ask (Prov. 2:6,7; Jas. 1:5). Of course, it all comes from God, laid up as treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ (Col. 2:2,3). The Spirit delights to take the things of Jesus and reveal them to us (Jn. 16:14).

While that is true, **there are times, occasions and people in which the Spirit is especially active to reveal wisdom and knowledge to meet a need or accomplish God's purpose.** In these situations, **the spiritual gift of wisdom is made evident by an unusual ability to know how to get things effectively accomplished.** Someone with the spiritual gift of wisdom will have unusual skill or ability at solving problems or handling situations. This may be in a limited area of expression or expertise, as we saw with a gift of wisdom in craftsmanship, ...or it may be in a larger sense of demonstrating unusual ability to recognize effective strategies, or even to know how to work with others to bring solutions to difficult situations. **The spiritual gift of wisdom will be resident in a person, and operative over time, so that they develop an earned reputation for their skill or ability.** Wisdom may be applicable in practical situations, such as dealing with mechanical things, ... or it may involve counseling or relationship issues, ...or it may involve leadership. **But a spiritual gift of wisdom will be recognizable by its unusual ability, and its use in serving, equipping and building up the Body of Christ.** People will seek such individuals out for help in their area of wisdom, ...and they will be motivated to serve and help in that way. Problem solving in their area of wisdom energizes them.

The spiritual gift of knowledge will be recognized by an unusual ability to know and master information. Such a person will not only have a curiosity that will motivate them to study and investigate, but **they will be able to retain, explain and make knowledge practical and understandable.** People will routinely seek them out for information, and they will enjoy sharing with others what they have come to know. This is an unusual ability, a Spirit-led and empowered ability that will not be like that knowledge that "puffs up", or makes people arrogant and divisive (1 Cor. 8:1). **The gift of the Spirit is given to serve, equip and help others. The gift of knowledge, when used properly, will bring strength to others.**

While these gifts are resident gifts, part of the consistent way in which the Spirit works in certain people in the Body of Christ, **there are also situational giftings of the Spirit** we read about in 1 Corinthians 12:9. In that context, Paul is describing a "word of wisdom" or a "word of knowledge". These are messages revealed by the Holy Spirit in that setting, and can be experienced by any of us. The distinction between the two is that **"a word of knowledge" is when the Spirit reveals something about a person or situation that could not normally be known.** Jesus used this in talking with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:16-18). It is a revelation about information that is otherwise not evident. **By contrast, "a word of wisdom" is a revelation from the Spirit about a course of action to take in order to solve a problem that would not otherwise be evident.** Jesus used that when He told Peter to catch a fish to pay their tax (Matt. 17:24-28). In each case, the unusual revelation was used by God to reveal Himself and minister to that person.