

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Seventh Week - First Day

GOD'S SECRETS

"From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a report about it with our ears.' God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind and apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain and a path for the thunderbolt, then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding'" (Job 28:20-28).

Let us today turn back to the twenty-eighth chapter in which Job launches out into an admirable discourse on man's search after that wisdom which consists in the knowledge of the ways of the Lord. It ought not to escape notice that he virtually divides this wisdom into two classes and defines carefully the degrees in which we may have access to them.

First, there is the wisdom in natural things, in which man may make great advances. Job illustrates this by referring to the skill man uses in finding the metals hid in the earth and the power and ingenuity he evinces in bringing them forth from their secret caves and adapting them to use. In fact, there is nothing in which the power of the human intellect is more palpably manifested than in its researches into the laws and mysteries of the material creation. We had only a year ago a striking example of this. A planet was discovered not by observation but by mathematical calculations based upon the knowledge acquired of those laws that God has established for the government of his universe; and whenever our thoughts are turned to this great event in the history of science we are astonished not so much at the discovery itself than at the evidence it offers of the depths to which man has been allowed to penetrate--or rather, of the heights to which he has been permitted to soar--in his search into this part of the divine wisdom.

But although man has been allowed, for the glory of God, to make large advances in the knowledge of what must have appeared in early ages secret and mysterious things of nature, and though he can trace the hidden vein of silver and mark out the place of the unseen stars, where shall he find that higher wisdom that consists in the knowledge of the secrets of God's throne, the goings forth of his providence and his grace? To this wisdom Job turns in the 12th

verse and pursues it to the end of the chapter. In the first or natural branch, he concedes to man some knowledge, but in the latter he testifies to man's utter ignorance. There may be "doctors of knowledge," but of this knowledge there is none. God may be pleased at times to reveal parts of it to some chosen man, but there is not one who can claim to be master of it; for it is lodged in the breast of God and locked up among his hidden counsels. Man knows nothing of it until the Lord reveals it, and He reveals it to very few (though many unwisely, vainly, or presumptuously seek after it--and would seize the secrets by storming the very inner sanctuary itself, if possible).

There is nothing in which the vanity of man appears more than in his dull neglect of those things that *are revealed* while eagerly pursuing those things of God that are *locked up and hidden*. There are many instances of this in Scripture, and they are always met by stern rebuke, especially from our Savior. "What is that to you? Follow me," was the answer given to one of them, and which well applies to all of them. Such seekers after God's hidden things are most apt to disregard the things that are revealed--treating them as "milk for babes"--and regarding themselves as those who seek "strong meat." But we follow our first parents when we hunger for the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge; and not so much because it is luscious as because it is forbidden. The key to this knowledge God has taken away.

Nevertheless, though the key is gone, rash men continually torture their ingenuity to either pick the lock or, failing that, going very far astray in wild fancies as to the secrets that lie within. In his keen thirst for hidden knowledge and in his fretful or proud impatience at the barrier God has set up, man forgets that he is not accounted ignorant for not knowing the things God has hidden--those things which lie beyond his sphere and which he has no means of knowing. Now no one calls a classical scholar ignorant because he knows nothing of engineering, even though that is useful and practical knowledge. How much less than must a man be deemed ignorant for not knowing that which is purposely hidden from him or that which would not be of practical value to him?

Some will yet ask, Why should God wrap up anything from us and hide it in darkness? Is it not for the glory of his great name that the deep things of his wisdom should be known? Is it not for man's honor to know much? And with the more he knows, is he not the better qualified to serve and honor God?

But this reasoning, if carried out to the end, would imply that we had a right to the highest degree of possible knowledge, thus not stopping short of the knowledge possessed by God himself. And besides, if we are already so greatly puffed up by the little we do know, what would become of us if we knew even as much as the angels who serve God and the spirits of just men made perfect? God knows that we could not stand it, and therefore He keeps us humble and thus prevents us from being exalted above our measure. And if even the Apostle Paul himself was not free from this peril--for in addition to his added knowledge he received an added "thorn in the flesh"--how would it fare with us?

It is certain that the Lord will keep no knowledge or wisdom from us that has any natural tendency to make us more holy, more humble, or that will render us more fit for communion with Him. But when He sees that we should only damage ourselves by the possession of certain kinds and measures of knowledge, even though that knowledge may be in itself good, He will be careful to hide it from us. Now a razor is in itself a good thing, especially if it is one of good quality. Yet we had a little daughter who slashed her face with one she had seen her father use and put away. The instrument was the same in her hand as in her father's, but while it was safe in his hands it was full of danger in hers. Though good in itself, it was hidden from her and placed beyond reach for her own safety. So does God deal with us. He bestows most freely all that is good for us and suited to our condition, but He keeps back all that would wound us and is unsuited to our present state.

Although the Lord is ever ready to satisfy our real needs and to impart all the knowledge we truly need, He will not satisfy the idle curiosity and vain aspirations of our intellect. Our faith is more precious in his eyes than our knowledge. By being left in the dark with the secrets of the divine wisdom in some things, we are in the better position of glorifying his wisdom in all things.