

Grow in Grace and Knowledge

The Process of Salvation

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 2/09/2013

Brethren, there is a process that leads to salvation. Do we know what this process is? More importantly, do we actively utilize this Process of Salvation – continuously in our daily living?

Today we will be studying the **Godly wisdom** that leads to salvation.

Let's begin by looking at some of the various aspects of our Salvational Process as we lay out the Specific Purpose Statement for today's sermon.

SPS: Do we realize just how blessed we are to have received God's **grace**, His **calling**, His Holy **Spirit**, and the wonderful knowledge and **wisdom** of the things of God that lead us to salvation?

Let's briefly mention a few definitions of this process.

Grace: Without grace there would be no salvation. Grace is so much more than God's unmerited pardon.

God's gift of Grace is granted to us so we may **spiritually grow** unto Jesus Christ.

The Grace of God conveys His limitless love and boundless mercy toward us! To live under the grace of God is to know His Love and recognize the value of His merciful kindness.

Calling:

John 6:

65 Jesus said that no man can **come unto me**, except it were given unto him of my Father.

John 6:

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Peter cautions us to give diligence to make our **calling** and selection sure. (2 Peter 1:10)

Holy Spirit: Is the personality, characteristics, mind, and power **of God** to do His Will throughout His creation – spiritual and physical.

For those of us who believe and love God, Holy Spirit is also the means by which the Father and the Son live in us, interact with us, empower us, and enable us throughout our **developing relationship** with them.

This developing relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is the Salvational Process we are discussing today. God's **Holy Spirit** is both of them living within us, uniting us with them.

Receiving God's Holy Spirit does **not** make life easy for us. But God's Holy Spirit does show us the way to salvation.

Jesus Christ's life was not easy – He suffered more than any man in order to make salvation available for all mankind.

We will see in the Holy Scriptures how we are admonished to increase in all of these things – God's **grace**, His **calling**, His Holy **Spirit**, and His **wisdom**.

As government and society all around us reject every facet of **Godly Wisdom** within our nation – there is the ever present danger that our Church of God leaders, and members, are exposed to more and more un-godliness.

Now, it is most imperative that we employ what is fast becoming unconventional **Godly Wisdom** in our daily lives.

Where can we find Godly Wisdom in these critical times?

Isaiah 33:

5 *The Lord is exalted; for He dwells on high: He has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.*

Zion – that is us the Church of God

Isaiah 33:

6 *And **wisdom and knowledge** shall be the stability of thy times, and **strength of salvation**: the reverence of the Lord is His treasure.*

Isaiah speaks of the “The reverence of the Lord is His treasure.”

* We will understand as we go on today that this “**reverence for the Lord**” is the **foundation** for knowledge, understanding and Godly wisdom.

How do church brethren attain the spiritual wisdom and knowledge that will give us the stability of our times, and strength of salvation?

In other words, what **plan of action** will preserve our course toward salvation?

We are on a pathway to salvation!

Isaiah speaks of the “*the stability of thy times.*” Godly Wisdom is *the stability of thy times* in these critical days.

When we come into God’s Church and are baptized – that is not the sum total of the Salvational Process. At that point we have so much more growing to do.

The Salvational process works like this:

In God's **grace** He chose to make us a part of His eternal Plan.

He **called** us from among those in the world.

He granted us **Repentance**.

God gave us the Faith we have in His Son, Jesus Christ to save us.

And so we buried the “old man of sin” when we were **baptized** (Romans 6:3-5).

He gave us His **Holy Spirit**, and the wonderful knowledge and **wisdom** of the things of God that **lead us to salvation**?

Let’s distinguish between **knowledge, understanding** and **Godly wisdom**.

Knowledge: is the accumulation of facts.

Hosea 4:

6 My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge**:

We need to know what the Bible says.

Proverbs 1:

7 *The reverence for the Lord is the **beginning of knowledge**: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 15:

33 The reverence of the Lord is the **instruction of wisdom**; and before honor is humility. [Pride wars against honor. Humility is doing things God’s way ... Humility is, I don’t have all the answers...]

Understanding: is the interpretation of facts and discernment in using knowledge.

Understanding is being able to comprehend the difference between good and evil.

Proverbs 9:

10 The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy One is **understanding**.

Wisdom: is the insight and character to rightly apply knowledge and understanding in our lives.

Wisdom does not come naturally. Just by joining a church group or being a church leader will not insure that you will have wisdom.

This Salvational Process of which we are looking into today – is the way a Christian convert comes to have even greater wisdom.

God gives us His wisdom as we submit to Him.

Higher wisdom: is the wisdom that comes from living according to God's law, way and ethics.

James 3:

17 The **wisdom that is from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated [approachable, willing to yield and compliant], full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

The attaining of wisdom must be of the highest priority in our lives.

The Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah speak of Jesus having these attributes of knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

Isaiah 11:

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a **Branch** [Jesus Christ] shall grow out of his roots: [this verse refers to the Messiah – Jesus Christ.]

John 1:

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the **Spirit** descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode **upon Him**.

Isaiah 11:

2 And the **Spirit** of the Lord shall rest **upon Him**, the **Spirit of wisdom** and [the **Spirit of**] **understanding**, the Spirit of counsel and might, the **Spirit of knowledge** and of the reverence of the Lord;

3 And shall make Him [Jesus Christ] of **quick understanding** [full comprehension] in the reverence of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears:

Brethren, we too are to grow up, as Jesus did, in **knowledge, understanding and Godly wisdom**.

We all understand that a child grows when he is fed.

A big part of childhood is growth.

It is essential that Children develop greater and greater **physical** and **mental** abilities.

God views us, His children's growth in the same way that we view the growth of our own children. We know that the mental and physical growth of our youth is expected and essential.

We understand how deeply tragic the cases of non-growth we witness from time to time are.

It is truly disastrous when children fail to mature mentally or physically because of disease, poor nutrition or environment.

God looks at the spiritual growth of His children in the same way.

God expects spiritual growth so much that He has established it as a basic doctrine of His church: "go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1).

Go on to **spiritual** perfection is what this verse is telling us. That is growth!

God knows that our growth is an ongoing salvational process.

God also knows the tragic, even eternal, consequences our failure to grow can bring. We've all seen lives wrecked – and tragically – salvation lost.

So important to God is our **spiritual growth** that He has taken exacting steps to ensure that we understand its nature.

Spiritual growth, like growth in children must be planned. God has called us to an incredible potential.

But, we must choose whether or not we will attain to it.

We stunt, we stymie our spiritual growth when we sin.

We will come into our salvational inheritance little by little, until we, with God's help, have conquered our three enemies: Satan, society and self – that includes the world and our own human nature. That is God's idea of growth.

1 Peter 1:

- 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

God planned on calling us before we were aware of it.

"Sanctification of the Spirit – shows the Working of God's Spirit in us that not only **separates** us from the world – but brings us to the fulfillment of the **Salvational Process**.

That is all the way to our resurrection to eternal life – as we see in Peter's next verse.

1 Peter 1:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a **lively hope** by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The "**lively hope**" refers to our resurrection.

1 Peter 1:

- 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you,

All this has to do with the Salvation Process.

1 Peter 1:

- 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith **unto salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

These verses demonstrate how we put the pieces of the Salvational Process together.

Proverbs 2:

- 10 *When **wisdom** enters into thine heart and **knowledge** is pleasant unto thy soul [life]; (then)*
 11 ***Discretion** shall preserve thee, **understanding** shall keep thee. [protect us]"*

Discretion: is the power and character to decide wisely and quietly for ourselves. Discretion implies a moral, a spiritual discernment that goes well beyond mere knowledge.

As we go through life, we see so many of our friends and acquaintances making poor choices that rob them of future blessings and prosperity.

What is the secret to making wise choices that will serve us well – not only in this life but in our ultimate salvation?

One of the problems in the Church of God today is the lack of the **utilization of the Godly wisdom** that is available to us.

Godly wisdom is full of compassion, replete with good works, impartial, and sincere.

The Scriptures instruct us in the art of learning to **crave** True Wisdom by teaching us how to make the right decisions that will guide our future.

Here is the secret that is unknown to the world:

I do not like the word “fear” in the King James Translation – as it applies to our relationship with God. “Fear” is old English usage – where people feared the king as much as they respected him. Let’s use the more proper translation of “**Reverence**” toward God.

***Psalm 111:**

10 *“The reverence and abiding respect of the Lord is the **beginning of wisdom**: A good **understanding** have all they who comply with His Commandments.”*

Beginning of wisdom – that is the starting place for wisdom – obedience to God.

This verse informs us that we are able to attain to greater Godly understanding and wisdom when our choices and our decisions are in line with Jesus Christ’s way of doing things.

Why aren’t we smart enough to see the cause and effects of our decisions when we make decisions that are not in accordance with the Will of God?

Why is Commandment keeping necessary to grow in Godly wisdom?

Well, the answer to that ageless question has to do with our own carnal self-justification.

It is the same mistake Adam and Eve made.

It is the same mistake Solomon made when he believed that he could have all those wives and concubines, and because he was the wisest of men, he thought he could foresee and avoid the consequences of his wrongdoing.

A man with a hardware store heard the broadcast and called in.

He explained that he was overjoyed to learn of the Kingdom of God.

He wanted to keep growing and learning all about God’s Truth – but he was **not** able to keep the Sabbath – not just yet.

Seems his best time of business was the half-day that he had to work on the Sabbath – but he wanted to grow in Godly wisdom until he could see his way clear to begin keeping Sabbath.

I explained that the Salvation Process was a lot like climbing a ladder – one rung at a time.

We build on each aspect that God reveals to us – and we are not allowed to keep sinning (breaking the Sabbath in his case) and continue to grow toward salvation!

On the other hand, when a person is willing to follow God’s perfect way, he will increase more and more in Godly wisdom.

It is a **spiritual principle** that the world is unwilling to believe.

Put simply, when we are sinning we cannot increase in grace and knowledge – but when we walk in God’s statutes and laws we will increase in Godly wisdom and understanding.

To follow after Godly Wisdom is to put every principle, virtue, attitude and value of Jesus Christ into every aspect of our daily lives. God’s wisdom is pure and innocent; it possesses no ulterior motives.

There are those who teach “easy” Gospels, or “prophecy” Gospels, are “Be true to your humanity” Gospels, or “we have all the time in the world” Gospels... Don’t you believe it.

2 Peter 3:

- 2** That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior:
- 3** Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days **scoffers**, walking after their own lusts,

Jesus Christ said there would be many scoffers, false prophets and false ministers in the last days – now!

2 Peter 3:

- 9** The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to **repentance**.

Repentance – our first step in the Salvation Process.

2 Peter 3:

- 10** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Nothing, nothing at all that we see around us will be here very much longer – it is all going to be gone – evaporated – burnt up – ashes under our feet (Malachi 4:3).

***2 Peter 3:**

- 11** Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Peter is telling us to get our priorities in order.

2 Peter 3:

- 14** Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

God will bring us to the conclusion of the Salvation Process.

***2 Peter 3:**

- 15** And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is **salvation**; [God is giving us time to work out our salvation with trembling and fear (verse :9 and Philippians 2:12)]

Peter is telling us to take care... guard yourself from error and ruin by growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:

- 17** Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

The title of today's sermon is taken from this next verse:

2 Peter 3:

- 18** But **grow in grace, and in the knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

We are told to *“prove all things, hold fast that which is good”* (**1 Thessalonians 5:21**).

***Colossians 1:**

- 9** *...For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the **knowledge** of His Will in all **wisdom** and **spiritual understanding**;*
- 10** *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the **knowledge** of God.”* (Colossians 1:9-10)

The Salvation Process is indeed difficult – from our point of view.

I knew a minister who taught that the Salvation Process was simple and easy.

“The only thing you have to do is ask God,” he said – “That is all there is to it.”

He said, “I baptize them and give them the Holy Spirit, and that is all there is to it.”

Brethren, let us understand that the Salvation Process will be on-going in our lives until we draw our last breath – growing in grace and knowledge.

It takes a certain kind of wisdom to go on to perfection. Man’s wisdom comes short.

James 1:

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works perseverance.

Right now – we are lacking in perfection – that is the way we are.

James 1:

4 But let perseverance have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

Next, we come to something else we are lacking – wisdom.

James 1:

5 If any of you **lack wisdom**, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

“O God, give me wisdom,” is a rather short prayer. God is not looking for code words – He desires of us that we do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

** There is more to obtaining **Godly wisdom** than just those five words.

“Ask of God,” – that sounds easy to those who look at their religion in shallow and superstitious manner.

Is that all there really is to growing in wisdom – just ask?

There are those who reason this way. “I asked God for wisdom – therefore I am now wise.”

Brethren, that is dangerous reasoning.

Those who reason that way will also make other decisions in the same way. They will think to themselves, “I prayed about such and such situation – and I came to this conclusion. Therefore my conclusion is the will of God.”

Certainly, we go to God – that is the correct source for wisdom – but let’s understand the process.

Wisdom is the insight and character to apply knowledge and understanding in our lives – we are not born with it – it does not come naturally.

James 1:

6 But let him ask in **faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Let’s be careful here, where James says to ask for wisdom in faith.

That does not mean that you say to yourself, “I really, really believe that God is going to give me wisdom.”

That is a false faith.

* The true and right **faith** that James is speaking of in verse :6 tells us that if we walk in obedience in the steps of Jesus Christ – living our life with all of His instructions about forgiveness, reconciliation, judgment, mercy and love of the brethren – that we will begin to grow in Godly Wisdom.

Godly wisdom is very rare on the face of the earth. It is even rare in the Church of God.

For Christians, when we have to make an important decision to make, and we wish to employ Godly Wisdom – we pray, we meditate, we measure all the options against the Word of God, we count the cost, we counsel, and then we choose and go forward.

James 1:

- 17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father...

We are about to see that Godly Wisdom is one of those perfect gifts that comes from **above**, and cometh down from God the Father.

James 1:

- 6** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Too many Church people still take after their original parents – Adam and Eve who tried to have one foot in the Garden of Eden – and one foot in the world.

They were “waverers.” They took of the tree of the knowledge of **good**, [yes,] and **evil**.

Adam and Eve wanted it both ways. They maintained that they had the prerogative to decide for themselves – ignoring Godly Wisdom.

James 1:

- 7** For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. [Including Godly Wisdom]
8 A double minded – a both ways - man is unstable in all his ways.

A double minded man says, “I know that God’s way is good – but sometimes I just have to ask God to look the other way for 5 minutes while I take care of the problem.”

James 3:

- 13** Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Good conduct is the first pre-requisite we see for Godly Wisdom.

We will see that James 3:14 is **not** the way to go about Godly Wisdom because this is the wisdom of the world.

James 3:

- 14** But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
15 This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

The wisdom of men is foolishness to God.

James 3:

- 16** For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. [No Godly results in performing that way.]

God’s wisdom is pure and innocent, it possesses no ulterior motives.

Now we get into Godly wisdom.

James 3:

- * **17** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated [approachable, willing to yield and be compliant], full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

This world would be a different place if men would crave true wisdom.

End