

The Gift of Wisdom

Rich Nathan

November 23-24, 2002

Spiritual Gifts: God's Way of Building Community

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

I want to begin by telling you a story of a little girl named Ruby Bridges. Back in 1960 a psychiatrist by the name of Robert Coles, who has been a professor at Harvard University in Medical Humanities, Psychiatry and Literature for many years, was in charge of an Army psychiatric hospital down in Biloxi, Mississippi. He happened to be in New Orleans when he saw a mob of people standing in front of a school screaming. It was 2:00 in the afternoon and Dr. Robert Coles realized that they were waiting for something. He asked one of the people what was happening.

A man answered, "She's coming out in a half an hour."

Dr. Coles said, "Who's coming out in a half an hour?"

Then he heard all the language about who she was. The people in the crowd began to curse and use lots of foul and vulgar language. Robert Coles decided to stay and watch to see what was going to happen. And out from this elementary school came this little girl named Ruby Bridges. And beside her were federal marshals.

They walked out and the people started in on her. They called her every foul name in the book. They shook their fists at her. They told her that they were going to kill her and that they wanted her to die.

Dr. Coles waited while she left in a car and wondered who was going to come out of the school next. He discovered that no one was coming out of the school next. The school had been totally boycotted by the white population in that town.

Here was a little African American girl who was the first black person to enter that elementary school. And she did that all by herself as a 6 year old in the Autumn of 1960. This is part of American history.

Well, Robert Coles, the Harvard psychiatrist, thought that he would conduct a little study and maybe present a paper on Ruby Bridges at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting. What a great opportunity to study stress in the life of a child. And so through the local NAACP chapter he was able to make contacts with Ruby Bridges' family and Dr. Coles went over to little Ruby's house a couple of times a week.

"How you doin', Ruby?" Dr. Coles would ask.

Twice a week she'd say, "I'm doing OK."

"Mrs. Bridges," he'd say, "How is Ruby doing?"

"Oh, she's doing just fine."

Well, Dr. Coles learned that many people, especially uneducated people, sometimes are not in touch with the level of stress in their lives. And so he asked more probing questions.

"Well, Mrs. Bridges, is Ruby sleeping OK?"

"Oh yes, Ruby is sleeping just fine."

"Are you sure she's sleeping just fine?"

"Yes."

"Well, how's her appetite?"

"It's fine. She's eating fine."

"Well, what about home? Is she playing with friends?"

"Well, Ruby's just fine when she comes home. She plays. Sometimes she reads the books she brings home. She's just in the 1st grade, but she's learning how to read."

"Does Ruby seem upset?"

"No, she's not upset."

"Is she crying at all?"

"No, not really."

Dr. Coles said that Mr. and Mrs. Bridges didn't know how to pick up these subtle symptoms of stress. Surely, they are there and Ruby was probably more upset than they realized. So he went in and talked with her teacher after a few months. The schoolteacher said to Dr. Coles, "You know, I don't understand this child. She seems so happy. She comes to school each day cheerfully. She has to walk through those screaming mobs day after day escorted by federal marshals."

Dr. Coles said, "Well sometimes people rally themselves during a crisis, but there will be a collapse." He kept following up on the Bridges' family and what he began to notice was here was a little girl who was 6 years old, whose parents were extremely poor, they were illiterate so they didn't even know how to sign their names. Mr. Bridges was a janitor and Mrs. Bridges took care of their three small children from morning to night. And after she tucked her little ones in, she ran out in the evening with a bucket and a scrub brush and she would go through a few white neighborhoods and scrub the floors of white families on her hands and knees. Then she would come back and catch a few hours of sleep and do it all over again day after day.

Here were people undergoing tremendous strain, but the amazing thing was they didn't seem to complain at all. Dr. Coles had treated families and children in affluent Boston suburban neighborhoods and these families had all kinds of problems. He couldn't explain the contrast of why this poor family was doing so well and the

families he treated in his Boston-based practice were falling apart under far less strain.

Every morning there would be between 50-75 protestors out on the streets screaming and cursing, and yelling at little Ruby when she arrived at school. And every day when she got out at 2:30 they were there again.

Well, one day Dr. Coles said to Ruby, "You know, Ruby, I talked with your teacher and she told me about something that happened when you came into school this morning."

Ruby said, "I don't remember what happened when I came in this morning."

Dr. Coles said, "Well, your teacher said she saw you talking with some of the people outside."

Ruby said, "I wasn't talking to the people."

Dr. Coles said, "Well, your teacher saw you talking to the people."

Ruby said, "Oh yes, I told her I wasn't talking to them. I was just saying a little prayer for them."

Dr. Coles said, "Ruby, you pray for the people there?"

She said, "Oh yes."

He said, "Really?"

She said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, why do you do that?"

She said, "Because they need praying for."

Dr. Coles was totally confused and said, "Well, why do you think they need you to pray for them?"

The little girl said, "Because I should."

Dr. Coles said, "Why? Why should you?"

She said, "Because I should."

Ruby's mother came into the room and she said, "We tell Ruby that it is important that she pray for people."

She had a list of some of the people who were in the crowd and every night Ruby and her mom would kneel down by Ruby's bed and pray for the people by name. Dr. Coles found out that the pastor of the little Baptist Church where Ruby and her parents went would publicly pray for the people in the crowd. The pastor taught them that when Jesus was persecuted he prayed, "Father, forgive them because they know not what they do."

As Dr. Coles tried to figure all of this out it threw him into an intellectual and emotional crisis. He looked back into his own life. Here he was, he had gone to Harvard and took all these classes on moral development; all these different hypothetical scenarios, what would be the ethical and moral thing to do in this or that case. Dr. Coles said he remembered in his psychology class he received an "A" for writing a paper on empathy. Yet, as he looked back, he remembered that there was a cleaning woman who used to come to clean the rooms at the halls where Harvard

students were housed. They used to have a name for these women who used to clean their rooms. They were called “biddies.”

He said, “I never knew the name of the woman who did this. She was just my biddie. She cleaned up after us. We were playing around and decided to smash some beer bottles. It was OK because our biddie would clean up. We never said please to her and we never said thank you. It wasn’t part of the curriculum at Harvard where I got an “A” in classes on empathy. And then there’s little Ruby Bridges and her illiterate parents who go through more stress in one day than I deal with in a decade and they do it with so much grace, so much peace, so much personal dignity.”

“What is it,” he wondered, “that Ruby Bridges and her parents understand that I don’t understand? What do they know that I don’t know? What have they gotten insight into that I don’t have insight into?”

This morning I’m going to continue my series on spiritual gifts and I want to talk very simply today about the gift of wisdom. Let’s pray.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Now before we look at the gift of wisdom in particular, I want to briefly put these gifts in a framework for you. We talked about this briefly a few weeks ago, but there are some gifts, many of them found in Romans 12, that you could think of as being more permanent, or abiding in nature. These are gifts that seem to be more subject to an individual’s own will or control.

For example, in Romans 12 Paul said if your gift is serving, you should serve. If your gift is teaching, make sure that you teach. If it’s encouraging, be sure that you are an encourager. If your gift is giving, give. If its leadership, govern diligently.

But the 1 Corinthians 12 gifts seem to be different than these. They seem to be less subject to the individual’s will and more subject to the will of the Holy Spirit. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:11, “All these are the work of the one and same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

John Wimber came up with the word “situational” to describe 1 Corinthians 12 gifts. And I think that is a helpful way to think about the gifts we have listed here. It is apparent, as I pointed out a few weeks ago, that you don’t have all the gifts you ever will have. I know some churches teach that. But it’s very apparent from 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 that you can ask God for gifts you don’t yet practice. For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:1, the apostle Paul says, “Follow the way of love and

eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.” And in 1 Corinthians 14:5, Paul says, “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues.” And later on in 14:13 Paul says, “If you speak in tongues in the church, then you ought to pray for the power to interpret.”

So it's evident we can pray for additional gifts and we're not locked into what we currently have. Beyond that, there may be some indication of the nature of the gifts by looking at the tense of the verbs in the original language, namely Greek. Paul says, “To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” In v. 8, “To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom.” And v. 11, Paul writes, “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

Now those verbs are present tense verbs in the Greek. And the Greek present tense signifies a continuing affection. Paul means to say here that the Holy Spirit gives a gift and he keeps on giving the gift. It is interesting that the verb tense here is not the Greek “aorist” tense. The aorist tense is used to signify some one-time action in the past that is now completed. For example, Jesus died – aorist tense. He doesn't keep on dying; he died. It was a one time action in the past, and it's now completed. The Holy Spirit does not give you a spiritual gift as some one-time action in the past, which you now have as your own possession subject to your control.

No, there is an ongoing giving. The Holy Spirit, moment by moment, animates the body of Christ. See, spiritual gifts are not some super powers that Superman has at any time and he can just use his x-ray vision at his will. 1 Corinthians 12 gifts require continual dependence upon God in this moment and an openness to see what God is going to do in the next moment. But they are subject to the control of God.

Let me underline this for a moment. I think this is really important. These gifts always remain gifts of the Holy Spirit who distributes them as he wills. Critics say, “Well, if you really had the gift of healing, why don't you go to the hospital and empty it? Well, you can't do that? Well, that proves there is no such gift as the gift of healing today.”

But friends, the issue is not whether a gift like healing exists. The issue is who controls the gift. These gifts aren't the gifts of Paul, or the gifts of Harry, or the gifts of Bill. They are called gifts of the Holy Spirit and he distributes them as he wills, not as we will. Even Paul, who was used by God to heal, couldn't heal everyone as Paul willed. In 2 Timothy 4:20, if you're taking notes, Paul left a man Trophimus sick in a place called Miletus. He told Timothy, in 1 Timothy 5, to take a little wine for his stomach and his frequent illnesses. If Paul could just heal him at Paul's will because he had the gift of healing, then he should have just healed him instead of suggesting using a little wine.

But the gift of healing wasn't subject to Paul's control. It was subject to the Holy Spirit's control. It's the same thing with prophecy. The reason we don't have a dial-a-prophecy phone number, where you can just call someone up and say, “What is God

saying to me now?" is because the gift doesn't work that way. The Spirit determines when he's going to give a revelation to a person for the purpose of prophecy. You don't determine that. God's Spirit does.

And so we are called to a posture of openness and dependence upon the Holy Spirit saying to God, "God, in this moment since there is a need, will you use me in one of these gifts?" And what a wonderful thing to come to a place in your life where you have an open expectancy that even though you have never exercised one of these spiritual gifts, that you have the attitude before God of saying, "Well, God, here we are at my kinship meeting; here we are at my women's group; here we are at my men's group; we're waiting on the Lord to give direction, to give insight, to speak." What a wonderful thing it would be if you said in that moment, "Well, God may want to use me to give a word of prophecy."

Or here you are, in a setting where someone is ill and to your knowledge God has never used you with the gift of healing in the moment. But you say, "Lord, use my hands and my prayers to heal this sick person." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had 6000 people in Vineyard who approached life in open expectancy that in this moment God may want to use you in ways that he hasn't done in the past?

I'll tell you this understanding of spiritual gifts changed my life 17 years ago. See, I thought that I knew my spiritual gifts. I saw that I had effect on people in teaching. It seemed that God had given me some gifting in leadership and evangelism. I became the president of our student Christian group a few months after coming to Christ. I also had the opportunity within a few months of coming to Christ to lead people to Jesus. But I never thought that God would use me to heal a sick person or to give a prophecy. Now when I read 1 Corinthians 12 it holds for me so many fresh prophecies today. Goodness, today God might wish to use me in a way that he has not used me in the past. Instead of, "Someone's sick. I better find the person who's the healer." It's, "Someone is sick? Lord, use me."

Now, it's definitely the case that some people are given these gifts in the moment more frequently than others. It appears that the same person is used very often to prophesy or very often to discern whether there is a demonic presence. But even then the gift is subject to the will of the Holy Spirit, not just the will of the person. The spirit must give a revelation for there to be a prophecy. Even if we have people who we say might have ministries in healing, or ministries in discerning spirits. That doesn't mean, friend, that God can't less frequently use you or me.

Expect more. Ask for more. Depend on God more.

And these spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 have sometimes been classified by the parts of the body employed. One helpful way to remember the gifts is to say that these gifts involve the body of Christ and so when we think down the body we say, "Well, the body of Christ has a mind, and the mind of Jesus is revealed through the gift of the message of wisdom, the gift of the message of knowledge, and the ability to distinguish between spirits. The body of Jesus has a mouth, and that might

include the gifts of prophecy, tongues and the interpretation of tongues. And the body of Jesus has hands; those hands might be employed in the gifts of healing, miracles and faith.

No particular classification model works perfectly. The gift of faith doesn't quite fit! The one I just suggested by the parts of the body employed just simply helps us to remember the spiritual gifts in a three-fold way.

But I want to focus today on the first of the spiritual gifts that Paul mentions – the message of wisdom. Verse 8, *To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom.* It goes on to say, *To another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.* Sometimes these are translated, “To one there is given the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge.” Either translation is possible from the Greek word “logos.”

Why did Paul begin his list with these two gifts – wisdom and knowledge? It's certainly not because they're the most spectacular or awesome. If he was interested in what was the most awesome, he'd probably begin with the gift of miracles. Most likely Paul began here because wisdom and knowledge were those gifts most highly prized by the Corinthians. Chapter 1:20 Paul says, “Greeks look for wisdom.” The Corinthians were Greek and the Greeks prized wisdom. They celebrated the wisdom of their great philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The Greeks measured the successful life by a person's familiarity and facility with philosophical wisdom.

In America, of course, we don't measure success by whether you know and quote philosophers. We measure success by the size of your paycheck, the size of your house, the size of your job, or how our football team is doing, or what kind of car you drive. If you are a woman, it may be how your kids are doing or how much you weigh. In 1st century Greek, it was philosophy and knowledge that defined success.

And what Paul does here is that he takes the value of wisdom and knowledge and he says the most valuable kind of wisdom and knowledge comes not by study or by education or by reading the philosophers. That may have some value, but the most valuable kind of wisdom and knowledge comes from a different source. It comes from the Holy Spirit. Verse 8, *To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.*

Now I want you to see this contrast between what men and women can know through their own study, through their own research, through their own investigation, and by way of contrast what can only come to us through a revelation of the Holy Spirit. Turn with me in your bibles back to 1 Corinthians 2. Here's what we read, “We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.”

See, there is a contrast between the wisdom that Robert Coles, a Harvard trained psychiatrist, had and the wisdom that Ruby Bridges, a six year old African American child, had. Robert Coles was thrown into an intellectual, emotional and spiritual crisis because all of his training did not prepare him for a child who could handle stress the way that this child did simply by following the teachings of Jesus.

What does the world in its wisdom know? How does the world in its wisdom think? Go back to the 1920's and 30's in Germany. Germany was one of the most educated nations in the history of the world. If you look at the first three decades of the 20th century, German scientists won the largest share of the Nobel Prizes that were handed out. German universities were the envy of the world. This was the nation that produced Einstein and Freud, and Schiller, and Goethe. It had the world's most impressive artists and musicians. When Hitler took over in January 1933, do you know what happened?

If you read German history you will find that within months the Nazis had working for them almost all of the journalists, the lawyers, the physicians, the psychiatrists, the philosophers. Some of the most brilliant minds that were quoted, like Martin Heidegger, were celebrating Hitler's coming saying that in Hitler a new age had dawned. The best and brightest minds participated in the Jewish Holocaust.

The world, in its wisdom, employs the most brilliant minds used to justify the unjust. The best and brightest minds scheme to defraud people of billions of dollars – whether we're talking about Enron or National Century Financial Enterprises in Dublin. When the world in its wisdom looks at human history, do you know what it sees? The great historian Arnold Toynbee said history is just the story of men and women going around in circles. There's no advance. There's no explanation. There's no rhyme or reason.

The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre said that the universe is absurd. The French existentialists said life makes them nauseous. Paul says he speaks a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. The people who say that the universe is absurd, that life makes them nauseous - the wisdom of this age steals people's pensions - offer defenses and philosophical excuses for dictators and holocausts and murders.

Paul says he speaks of a secret wisdom, a wisdom that is hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Ultimately, where we see the blindness and the futility of this world's wisdom is when it comes to their failure to perceive who Jesus Christ is. What did this world in all of its wisdom perceive and understand when it looked at Jesus of Nazareth? The greatest men in the world didn't get it. They looked at Jesus of Nazareth and just saw a man, a carpenter, a Jewish rabbi, who was a threat to their power and pretensions. They didn't see that Jesus was God come in the flesh. They didn't perceive that this man Jesus was God the Creator of heaven and earth come down to rescue and save us.

When the rulers and wise men and the religious and philosophers looked at Jesus, they didn't know that looking back at them through his eyes were the eyes of Almighty God. In rejecting Jesus, the wise didn't understand that they were rejecting God. When the rulers crucified Jesus, they didn't know that the nails they were pounding into his hands were being pounded into the hands of God.

The wisdom of this world doesn't understand Christmas. When people today talk about Christmas, the wise and learned, the rulers of our hospitals and our government, and our media empires talk about family gatherings. They talk about the spirit of giving. But they don't know; they haven't understood; they haven't perceived the identity of the Baby born in Bethlehem. But he, being born a man, was also God. Two natures, one human and one divine, eternally joined together in the one person Jesus Christ.

How do you get to see below the surface? How do you finally capture the mind of God about life, about your life, or most importantly about Jesus – who he is and what he's done for us? You only capture the mind of God by the Holy Spirit. Verse 9-10, *However, as it is written, 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him' but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.*

Steve Robbins, the director of Vineyard Leadership Institute, wrote his PhD dissertation in part on the spiritual gifts of wisdom and knowledge. He defined the gift of wisdom as Holy Spirit given insight into God's plan of salvation centered in Jesus. This thought runs through all of the New Testament. People on their own, with their own wisdom, with their own brainpower, with their own study and investigation, don't get Jesus.

When Peter had that flash of insight at Caesarea Philippi in response to Jesus' question: "Who do people say that I am?" Peter looked at Jesus and said, "You are the Christ. You are the Son of the Living God." Jesus didn't respond to Peter and say, "Peter, what an amazing guess. WOW. Out of all the possibilities you just nailed it. Peter, what brilliant intuition. You're so smart. You must have an IQ of 180."

He didn't say, "Peter, you must have studied all the great philosophers. Did you take a psychology course on intuition?"

Jesus said, "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, because this wasn't revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

In Matthew 11:25-26 Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." It's hidden from psychiatrists like Robert Coles, but revealed to little children like Ruby Bridges.

Have you had this revelation from God? Has God given you the flash of insight regarding who Jesus is? See, friends, we are finite and our minds are sinful and

darkened and fallen. We will not understand God's secrets, what Paul calls, "God's hidden wisdom" apart from his Holy Spirit. Your mind needs to be illuminated and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. You need God's revelation. You need the gift of wisdom, other wise you'll never get Jesus.

Oh, you can talk about church and being a good Christian and doing nice things for each other without the spiritual gift of wisdom. You can enjoy Vineyard's services, how laid back we are. You can sing our worship songs and even get moved emotionally. You can cry through the service. You can enjoy the message. But you won't get who Jesus is without the Holy Spirit given gift of wisdom. Do you pray for the gift of wisdom? The flash of Spirit-given insight regarding Christ? Do you pray for the gift of wisdom to be given to friends and relatives who just don't get it? Do you pray that God would put in your mouth a message of wisdom so that you could communicate that insight, that revelation concerning who Jesus so that you could lift the veil off people's minds?

Followers of Christ, have you not been frustrated as you've tried to explain to someone else why you love Jesus, why you cherish him, why you've traded in your goals in life for his goals? Frustrated by trying to explain to parents or relatives why you do what you do with your kids? Have you never been frustrated when you look across the table and you realize that this person doesn't get it? Why you've taken the route you've taken in marriage. Have you never said about another human being, "What's it going to take?" You've sat through some of the best explanations in the world about Christ. You've given them these great books. They've heard the arguments. But their hearts are still not moved to not only perceive who Jesus is, but to love him.

We need the gift of the message of wisdom, Holy Spirit given insight to communicate who Jesus is and also what Jesus has accomplished. I want you to see this secret hidden wisdom of God that the philosophers don't understand, that the rulers of this age don't understand. It's not just who Christ is, but what he's accomplished. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:30. We read, *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Here is Paul's declaration of the content of God's secret wisdom, wisdom that can never be understood through our unaided intellects alone. Wisdom that the finite, fallen, sinful mind of man cannot perceive – namely that Christ is our righteousness, our holiness, (other versions say our sanctification), and our redemption. To the extent that you don't get the fullness of the salvation accomplished for you in Christ, you need the spiritual gift of wisdom.

See, we often feel terrible about ourselves. We have so many regrets in our lives – what we've done; what we failed to do. Some of you have aborted your own babies, pressured girlfriends or wives to obtain abortions. Some of you have been unfaithful to your marriage vows. Some of you have stolen from businesses you've worked for. You've taken from family members or friends and have not repaid your debts. Some

of you have cheated on exams, plagiarized papers, and betrayed friendships. You have various addictions, secret habits. There are people in your lives that you haven't forgiven. Or maybe you are proud because you don't think you are guilty of any of these things.

How can we, being what we are, stand before holy God on the Day of Judgment? At any moment you or I may die and stand before God. How will we survive God's searching judgment and not be condemned before Holy God as guilty? Paul says here is God's wisdom. Christ has been made our righteousness. Though you have sinned throughout your life up until this very moment, if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you bring your sins and yourself to him, you will be forgiven. And clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ right now you will be able to stand in the presence of God Almighty and be declared innocent.

Righteousness through faith in Christ is part of the message of wisdom. So is holiness or sanctification through Christ. OK, you've crossed the line. You've trusted in Christ, but how do you go on? How do you continue to walk with God even if your status with God is right? How do you become right? How do you break persistent habits? How do you live cleanly now?

Perhaps, friends, it is at the point of learning to walk out the Christian life that you need the gift of the message of wisdom. You understand how to get in, but you do not understand how to move forward, how to find the abundant life that Christ promises. You need to pray, "God, give me the gift of wisdom so I can see Christ not only as my righteousness, but as my ongoing holiness."

Here is God's wisdom; you move forward, you find the abundant life of Christ, your ongoing holiness, and your ongoing sanctification by clinging to Christ. He is my holiness. I need to look to Christ and trust in Christ with all the issues of my life. Whatever I'm chaffing at the bit at, whatever I'm upset over, whatever I'm angry with Jesus about because my life hasn't turned out the way I wanted it to, you believe Jesus has withheld something from you – a child, a marriage, a job, ministry success – Paul says look to Christ, trust in Christ. He is your ongoing sanctification.

The Christian life is not coming to Christ in the beginning and then gutting it out on your own with your own human strategies. If you're fumbling and stumbling and bumbling as a Christian, you need the gift of God's wisdom. Christ is your holiness.

And if you are worried about the future, friends - if you are worried about future trials, future illness, if you are worried about what will happen to you in the future when you die, if you don't think that you would have Ruby Bridges peace if you were stressed out, if you wonder how you can have peace before you go in for serious, risky surgery - you need to have the wisdom of God that is Christ your redemption. What is your hope for yourself, a loved one, who is diagnosed with cancer or heart disease or any other life-threatening illness?

It is Christ your redemption. It is because I am joined to Jesus Christ, it is because I am looking to him, it is because I am in Christ that on the last day God will raise me and he will raise up all others who are in Christ. We will be raised bodily from the dead and in a blinking of an eye; I will be transformed so that body, soul and spirit will resemble Jesus' glorious resurrected being. Together we who are raised from the dead will shine like the sun and stars forever and ever. That is God's secret wisdom, friends. Christ, our redemption!

Have you received God's wisdom? Has God's Spirit illumined your mind about Christ? Has God's Spirit illumined your mind about the fullness, the totality of the salvation given to you when you trust in Christ? Is your life really radically different than all of the people around you because you get it? Because you have been enlightened and illumined about Christ? Are you a person who doesn't freak out about world events, about your job situation, about your finances, about the most recent irritation from some person or family member? Are you a person who does not freak out, but continues to live steadily, persistently, peacefully whatever happens? Friend, have you received the spiritual gift of wisdom?

Now, of course, this gift of wisdom applies not only to our insight regarding who Christ is and what he has done. This gift of wisdom applies to what Christ is up to right now in your life. You are going through difficulties and trials, James says pray for wisdom, God-given insight, God-given revelation, God-given illumination so that you could see what the Lord is up to, so that you can grasp how he wants you to respond in the moment.

I'll tell you friend, wisdom from God stabilizes you. Some time ago I was going through a personal crisis. I was deeply depressed. I dreaded the future. I talked with friends who were empathetic, but who had no answers. I went to God and the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and gave me the gift of wisdom in my crisis. The Spirit of God spoke to me and said, "Rich, you can choose right now your response to what's going on in your life. You can choose to continue to love me, to continue to serve me, to model for others stability in a time of crisis, or you can chafe at the bit and get angry about how life has turned out for you and be depressed and anxious." By the grace of God I said, "Lord, I want to choose to trust you with this. Right now I choose to respond well, to submit to your will, to receive this from your hand, to try to model for others stability in trials."

Wisdom from God. Ruby Bridges and her family had it. Friend, do you have it? Do you need it? Do you need to ask God for it? Let's pray.

The Gift of Wisdom

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November 23-24, 2002

Spiritual Gifts: God's Way of Building Community

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

- I. Recognizing the Gifts: Robert Coles and Ruby Bridges

- II. Classifying the Gifts
 - A. By Their Controller: God or Us (1 Cor. 12:11)

 - B. By the Parts of the Body Employed

- III. Examining the Gifts: The Message of Wisdom
 - A. Insight Into Who Jesus Is
 - 1. The Wisdom of this Age

 - 2. The Hidden Wisdom of God
(1 Cor. 2:6-16; Mt. 16:13-17; Mt. 11:25, 26)

 - B. Insight Into What Jesus Has Done (1 Cor. 1:30)
 - 1. Righteousness

 - 2. Holiness

 - 3. Redemption

 - C. Insight Into What Jesus Is Doing