

FAITH FORUM

The Spirit of God will provide you with wisdom

PAUL NEWMAN

Remember poor old Job? He was in torment. He cried out: "I loathe my life ... I am a laughing stock ... My spirit is broken ... The night racks my bones ... My heart is in turmoil and is never still." Then he asks, in effect: "How can I understand this? How can I cope with it? Where does wisdom to live come from? Where is it when I need it?"

Crises of all kinds in people's lives and in the world provoke this question. How can we cope with this? What in the world should we do? Wisdom, where are you?

Job spells out the answer: "It is the Spirit in people, the breath of the Almighty, that makes them understand." The Spirit gives wisdom. In my wife's family, the kids

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

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were taught wisdom that had a significant effect on their lives. It was this: "Always remember, you are as good as anybody else, and not one whit better." How many of us have heard the wise advice? "If you can't say something good about a person, don't say anything at all."

Some so-called wisdom is not Godly. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going" seems to be the wisdom of all the cold

wars and hot wars. The human race is in danger of toughing ourselves to death. Our epitaph might be: "They believed in tit for tat." Not good wisdom.

Christians look to Jesus as the criterion of wisdom. He was full of the Spirit of God. For wisdom, we can look to what he taught, how he lived and died and what his Spirit is really like.

Some examples of what he taught: "Do not be anxious about your life. Judge not, for with the judgment you make you will be judged. Do not throw your pearls before swine. Do not hoard wealth for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Build your house upon a rock (metaphorically or actually). If anyone would be first, he or she must be last of all, and servant of all. In every-

thing, do to others as you would have them do to you. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing. Beware of practising your piety before others. If you forgive others their trespasses, God will also forgive you."

Most important was the example Jesus set in his own life. His most difficult crisis was just before he was killed. The way he dealt with it has been called the way of the cross. It was not a way of quiet capitulation to evil. It was a way of active, prophetic witness to the truth. It confronted his opposition with clear challenge.

But in the end, he chose not to fight violence with violence, calling for forgiveness of his enemies rather than having many die in the inevitable conflict. This way of love was the epitome of the wis-

dom of God in Jesus Christ.

Paul describes it: "We preach Christ crucified, ... the wisdom of God." James, the brother of Jesus, speaks of this wisdom. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity."

It is a realistic hope for us and for the world. It merits the celebrations of Christmas.

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