

Gnosticism

1 Timothy 6:20–21 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

- Paul encourages Timothy to guard what comes from God (committed to your trust) and distinguish that from what comes from man (idle babblings and contradictions – falsely called knowledge).
- When we do not distinguish between the two, straying from the faith is likely.
- This tells us – Human knowledge cannot aid in establishing us in the faith.

What is Gnosticism?

- It's actually fairly complex, dealing with the hatred of all physical things including our own bodies, some mysticism, but mostly with philosophy.
- For our purposes we will limit it to philosophy. Gnosticism states that to become enlightened leads to salvation, and enlightenment comes from knowledge. If we can know enough, we transcend worldliness.
- When it got mixed with Christianity it said that if we gain enough knowledge about God, then we will get saved.

But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater

- From the Bible, we know that our salvation is by faith, not by knowledge.
 - Better for you to believe you are righteous and not understand how God made you righteous – than for you to know exactly what the cross accomplished yet not believe it actually makes you righteous.
- However, even Paul, a true proponent of faith, said he pursues knowing Christ because in His knowing of Christ it produces more faith.
 - **Philippians 3:8–11** Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have

suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Where does that leave us?

- We pursue knowing God, Jesus, the Word – but with the goal of building our faith, our relationship, not our knowledge.

Colossians 2:6–10 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

- As you received – so walk. We received by faith, so walk in faith.
 - We cannot perfect in the flesh what was started in faith. (Gal 3:3)
- Beware lest anyone cheat you:
 - What does he mean by cheating us? Cheat = sulagogeo – to seduce and lead away with the intent of robbing you. (Think con)
- We are robbed through:
 - Philosophy and empty deceit – According to traditions of men – According to the basic principles of this world

In other words – if you rely on the wisdom of this world to form your spirituality, your morality, your identity, or anything that is supposed to be God’s to build – you are allowing yourself to be robbed blind.

- Example – Sex outside of marriage – the world promises we need it. The Bible says it is reserved for marriage. Outside of marriage it leads to STD’s,

unwanted pregnancy which could lead to abortion, soul ties, difficult living situations, distrust when marriage does happen, addiction to sex which can lead to all forms of sexual perversion.

- And all those things, the world then continues to try to justify with knowledge – abortion – it's not really a baby
- STD's – we can treat them so you can live normal
- Sexual perversion – Homosexuality is ok it won't lead to anything, trans is ok, it won't lead to anything, furies are ok, they don't lead to anything, Pedophilia is ok, that won't lead to anything...
- Example – It's fine to play around with occultic or witchcraft things, like games. It's just for fun. It's really not!
- Example of getting knowledge from the world – Jesus loves everybody so He accepts everybody exactly as they are and affirms them as who they are. He created them, so He created them like this. And if you don't affirm them, then how can you say you are loving? And besides, didn't Jesus eat with sinners?
- Example – The world says it is arrogant to preach the Gospel to Jews, or Muslims, or Buddhists, etc... But in reality, it is loving. The Word says that whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son, does not have life.

We fall prey to this kind of thinking when we are not “rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.”

Gnosticism (the wisdom of the world) wants us to rely on what we can know with our minds. God wants us to rely on what He knows and to trust Him by faith.

1 Corinthians 1:18–25 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: *“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”* ²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

- In other words – the world in all of its knowledge and wisdom, can never grasp the actual Gospel message. When they try to, it will be warped and wrong. The simplicity of the Gospel will seem like foolishness to them,
- But to those that surrender to faith, and trust in Him, that message becomes real power. And real wisdom. Because even God at His most foolish is wiser than men at their best, and God at His weakest is stronger than all men at their best. (Hyperbole – God is never foolish nor weak)

So people that trust in their own knowledge and wisdom will not amount to much in the Kingdom of God.

- **1 Corinthians 1:26–31** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹ that, as it is written, *“He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”*
- This does not mean that God doesn’t use smart, capable people. It means that people must surrender their own strength and intelligence and trust in God for His strength and wisdom.
- Those that surrender their knowledge and allow faith in God and His message to reign in their lives will triumph over the things of the world.

The result of this is that God gets the glory. For it is Him doing all things.

Listen to Paul taking his own advice:

1 Corinthians 2:1–8 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. ⁶However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The wisdom of this world is garbage. The wisdom of God is where real life and power come from.