[DOCTRINE RESUMED.]

[The text is] Matt. 25:1-12, especially v. 2, 1 “And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

Three things wherein they differ:

1. [That the one have] oil {in their lamps, and the other have none}.

2. [The] consequences [of this].

3. [That] general character [manifest from the consideration of both].

I come now to the

3. [Third] and last thing wherein the difference consists, viz., their general character, which is manifest from both the foregoing things: and that is, that the one are wise, and the other foolish. This indeed appears by all that we are taught of them in this, by all those things that have been observed of each; but especially from those different qualifications, that different behavior, and that different issue of things with respect to them that has been taken notice. This is what every particular declares, and especially is this manifest from all particulars together.

In discoursing of this point I shall only,

1. [(1)] First, show how this difference in the general character of true Christians and false, appears from the consideration of those points of difference that have been already spoken of.

2. [(2)] And secondly, I would show how that those opposite characters are emphatically ascribed to them, and do belong to them above all persons in the world.

1. [(1)] But in the first place, I would [show] how that this
difference in their general character, viz., that the one sort are wise and the other foolish, appears from the two sorts of difference forementioned, viz., that one has oil and the other none, and in the consequences of it.

1. This appears from the consideration of that difference, that the one has oil in their vessels, or grace in their hearts, and the other none; and that, either in the different conduct of each that respects the obtaining grace, or in the difference that consists in the one’s having it, and the other being without.

a. The wisdom of the one, and the folly of the other, appears in their different conduct with respect to obtaining of it. The one took thorough care to obtain oil in their vessels before they went out to meet the bridegroom, the other neglected.

We are told that the one took oil in their vessels with their lamps, but that the other took their lamps and took no oil with them.

The one wisely considered what they should stand in need of, in that undertaking that they were setting out upon it. They considered that it was of necessity that they have their lamps continued burning till the bridegroom come, that they might meet him with lights in their hands, to put proper honor upon him, and that they might be accepted of him; and they considered that it would not be expected that the flame of their lamps should hold, without oil to feed them.

And therefore they took care, before they set out on this undertaking, to have all things in readiness, that they might be acceptably received by the bridegroom, and not be put to shame when he came.

On the contrary, the other never wisely considered this matter. They had lamps, and they hoped that would be sufficient, not considering how little lamps would signify without oil.
They see that their lamps burnt and gave light for the present moment, and so they set their hearts at ease, and never considered with themselves that, however their lamps flamed now, it was impossible that the flame should last without oil to feed it; and so they foolishly neglected to take any care to get oil. For the present, their lamps gave light as well as those of the other; they made as good a show outwardly, and they contented themselves with that.

But [they] acted like madmen, or persons bereft of their reason, to expect a fire could be continued without fuel, or that the flame of a lamp could be upheld with nothing but a wick without oil.

The wise virgins considered of what great importance the errand was that they went forth upon, viz., to meet the bridegroom, and how much it concerned ‘em to have success in it; and therefore, like wise persons, they spared no pains nor cost, that they might be so provided as to be safe in this matter, and secured from such a dreadful calamity as failing in this undertaking.

The other, on the contrary, foolishly begruchted the trouble of going after oil, and the cost that must be expended, and so sottishly ran the venture of greatest interest--yea, their all--upon no better security than the flame of a burning wick without oil to feed it.

The wise virgins were seasonable in their care to obtain oil; they took care of that matter in the first place, before ever they set out to meet the bridegroom. The other very foolishly put it off to the very last, till it was too late.

They were not willing to put themselves to the trouble of going after oil, or the expense of buying of it, when they might have done it to good purpose and had a fair opportunity for it: and so they foolishly put it off till all their opportunity was gone.

And then at last, when it was too late, and it would be to no
purpose to seek it, then they are willing to be at the trouble, and go in a great hurry to buy oil, at the time when they should have gone forth with the rest to meet the bridegroom with lamps in their hands.

Alas, what did it signify to go after oil to feed their lamps to meet the bridegroom with, and put honor upon him, when the bridegroom is already gone by with his attendants, and has entered into the marriage? Now, they are sensible, 'tis of great import to have oil.

Now they are in distress for some: they see now by experience that lamps won't continue burning without oil, and how dull and foolish were they, that they could not be convinced of this before they saw it.

Now they are sensible that to have oil in their vessels, is well worth the price {to buy it} and expense {of time}. Alas, where were their thoughts, that they were not sensible of this before? They had time enough to bethink themselves. What were they doing, what were they employed about, that they never in all that time considered those things before?

The wise virgins acted wisely, in that they did not depend on uncertainties in so great an affair. When they were about to go forth in this great undertaking, they wisely considered that they did not know how long the bridegroom might tarry; and therefore, that they might be provided against the worst, they took oil sufficient to keep their lamps a long time burning.

But the other foolishly neglected to make any provision for this. When they set out, they never prepared to meet with difficulties; and therefore, when difficulties came, they were overthrown. They never sat down to count the cost, and so, though they began to build, they never finished, and so exposed themselves to be mocked and derided for their folly.

They foolishly depended on the greatest uncertainties; when they went forth to meet the bridegroom, they thought nothing of future
difficulties. And when the bridegroom tarried, instead of improving that opportunity that he by tarrying gave them to go and buy oil, [they] but seem to act as if they concluded that because he was not come yet, that he never would come at all, and so went to sleep instead of going to buy oil; and while they were sleeping, taking their slothful ease, their lamps went out. These things are a lively representation of the foolish conduct of sinners under means of grace and opportunities for salvation.

But that true Christians are wise, and others foolish, don’t only appear in that one have been thorough in seeking grace, and the other neglected it; but,

[b.] Secondly, the wisdom of the one and the folly of the other appears in that, [that] the one have grace, and the other are without it. And that, for this reason, viz., because that grace is the greatest and the only true wisdom, and that sin that graceless persons are under the dominion of, is the greatest folly. Here,

[(a)] First, grace is the greatest and only true wisdom. The word “wisdom” is commonly used in Scripture for grace, because herein consists the only true wisdom; and so sin is commonly called “folly,” and “wicked men” and “fools” are terms used synonymously in Scripture. And the Scripture does directly teach us that godliness is the greatest and only true wisdom. Prov. 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is [the beginning of wisdom].” Job 28:28, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” And that it is so, that grace is the greatest and only true wisdom, if we considered wherein wisdom consists. It consists in two things, viz.:

[a.] First, in the knowledge and right understanding and judgment of things.

[b.] Second, in a prudent determination of the mind in it designs and pursuits.
And,

a. If we consider the first thing that belongs to wisdom, viz., knowledge and right understanding and judgment of things, it will appear that those have the greatest and only wisdom, that have grace in their hearts. Grace gives a true knowledge. I John 2:27, “Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.”

[Grace is] knowledge of the most excellent and important objects. They only have a true knowledge of, or judgment about, anything, {who have grace}. They only have the right knowledge of God, {or} of themselves, or of other things, {who have grace}.

b. Grace influences the mind to a prudent determination in its designs and pursuits. Prov. 8:12, “I, Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty invention.” {Grace influences them to make a} prudent choice. They only {who have true grace know the} right end, true happiness, prudent means, wise ways, {and} wise behavior.

(b) That sin that false Christians are under the power of, is the greatest folly.

a. [They have the] most wrong and foolish notions of things, [and] blindness and darkness of the soul. II Cor. 4:4, “In whom the god of this world [hath blinded the minds of them which believe not].” [They have the] most foolish notions of God. [They thought God was] altogether such an one as themselves. In their thoughts, [they] rob God of the glory of his perfections.

[They have] foolish thoughts of themselves, high [thoughts] of other things; [they] deify the world. [They have] foolish thoughts of time and eternity.

b. [That sin that false Christians are under the power of,] is an habitual inclination of heart to a most imprudent and foolish
determination in its designs. [It inclines to a] foolish choice, [a] foolish course, [so that they] pursue even [their own] misery. Prov. 8:36, “All that hate me love death.”

I proceed now to show,

b. That this different and opposite character is manifest from the consequences of the one’s having oil, {and the other not}. It appears in the consequence of it that respects their behavior, viz., in the one’s being steadfast and persevering in the profession and practice of religion, and in the unsteadiness and fickleness of the others.

Steadiness in conduct in temporal affairs, especially those that are of great weight, is looked upon as a great part of wisdom, and instability and fickleness a great evidence of weakness and folly.

And above all things is it so in affairs of such vast concern as that which we are speaking [of], that concerns the honor of God and our own eternal interest.

How wisely do they act who, when they have once begun in religion, so hold on and follow God and Christ and their own soul’s salvation, in the ways of universal obedience to God’s commands, however they may be flattered to draw them away, and what opposition soever they may meet with from those enemies that seek to fright them from their duty and the way of their happiness. How much is it a man’s wisdom to disregard all the scarecrows that the devil can lay in his way, to fright him back or hinder his going on heavenward, and to disregard those light afflictions that are but for a moment in comparison of that far more exceeding [happiness].

But then [there is] the wisdom of the one and the folly of the other in all these, from the consideration of the final issue of things, with respect to the state of both: and this is the most lively mirror in which we may behold the wisdom of true and the folly of false Christians, when we come to see the issue of the different choice that they make, and
behold the exceeding different ends to which the opposite courses they take lead them to.

When the false Christians' lamps are totally and eternally gone out, then will their folly appear in not taking oil. When their good opinion of their own state and all their hopes, come utterly to vanish away then, and their hope turns into disappointment and confusion, issues in everlasting shame, then will be seen most clearly the folly of their hopes, and the foolishness of all their presumption and false dependence.

Then will appear their folly of building their house on the sand, in making a spider's web their trust, in satisfying themselves with shadows, and clothing themselves with such fig leaves.

And on the contrary, when the hope of the godly at Christ's appearing comes to be confirmed, and {their hope turns into joy}; and when that time comes, when true Christians are admitted {into the eternal wedding banquet}; then will it be most abundantly manifest how wise {are those who had oil in their lamps}. Then the truth {of true Christians' hope} will be manifest, {and the} falsity of the surmises {of false Christians, and their vain} imaginations, {will be known}. Then the vast importance {of having oil in their lamps} will be manifest.

Then will the wicked themselves be all convinced of the wisdom of the godly in {getting oil, and} in {being ready for the bridegroom}, in those things that formerly they were ready to wonder at them and despise them for. Then {will they} see their own folly {in} not improving opportunities, {and} not taking pains to get oil {in their lamps}, not harkening to counsel.

Then will their folly appear and be declared by the voice of their own consciences, {and by the} voice of the Judge, {and by their} own voice, crying out of their folly.

Having thus shown how the wisdom of true Christians and {the folly
of false Christians appears}, from the one’s having oil and the other having none, and the consequences, I proceed now, in the

[(2)] Second place, to show those opposite characters are emphatically ascribed, and do belong to them eminently and above all persons in the world. Here are two things:

I. That there are no other wise persons in the world, but only true Christians.

There are those that are called wise men [among the] heathen philosophers. Now are men of great learning {accounted wise persons, and} many great politicians, {and there are wise persons} among the great divines.

If natural men are not wise men, {who have} no true knowledge {of divine things, no} right judgment {in the} main things, things of greatest importance, {then they have} no true prudence and discretion, {that belong to true Christians}.

[The] weakest Christian, the little child, [is wiser than they]. Eccles. 4:13, “Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” {A child} knows more of [the] important truth, {and has} greater prudence.

I Cor. 1:25, “[The] foolishness of God is wiser than man.” This appears in God’s choosing the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise. True wisdom is not attained by learning, by education in colleges {by study with} learned tutors, {and by reading} many books. {True wisdom is} not gotten for gold. Job 28:14-[15], “[The depth saith, It is not in me: and the] sea saith, It is not with me.” Prov. 2:6, “[For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding].” True Christians are the only truly wise persons. {They are truly wise,} not only as their spiritual wisdom excels human learning and policy, but all moral virtue, [the] virtue of philosophers and great
men. {Thus} many men have been eminent for virtue, and called wise on that account, yet know not God. The world by wisdom knows not God, don’t know Christ and him crucified—I Cor. 1:20, “God makes foolish [the] wisdom of this world”—because it is foolish.

2. False Christians are the greatest fools of all persons in the world; not the only fools, {but the greatest}.

[The heathen,] they han’t such an opportunity, such light and instruction; [they have not been] told how they may obtain, [or] told the necessity of it. [They] han’t such warning; {they} are not told of the bridegroom’s coming. {They know not} the blessings he will bestow on the wise, and the misery [he will bestow on the foolish]. Their hope is not so foolish a hope, their trust not so foolish. They are more willful.

[APPLICATION.]

Use of Exhortation, to those that are in a Christless condition. Foolish virgins, forsake your folly and seek spiritual wisdom! To leave the folly of neglecting and preparation for {eternal misery}, wisely consider the absolute necessity you stand in of oil. Don’t trust in external appearances; consider how unreasonable [it is] to expect that they should be continued without oil. Don’t begrutch the trouble. Be seasonable.

Don’t depend on uncertainties. {Be exhorted to} seek the true wisdom, [the] right knowledge of things.

Consider,

First. How much bodily sight is prized.

Second. How much pains many take for learning and worldly wisdom, [as] education {in colleges, and} universities, {and} travelling® [to distant places].

Third. How long you have been in the school of Christ? II Tim. 3:
7--silly ones, led away, never learning, and never coming. “O fools, when will ye be wise?” [Ps. 94:8]. Prov. 27:22, “bray a fool in a mortar [among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him].”

Fourth. What would you think of any that you saw, so foolish in temporal affairs as you are in spiritual things of such importance, so slack, negligent of opportunity? [What would you think of one who would] run such great ventures, give away his life for a song?

Fifth. You sink yourself below the brute creatures in folly. Is. 1:3, “[the] ox knows his owner.” Jer. 8:6-7, “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.”

Sixth. As those sinners that {continue Christless} under the gospel {are the} greatest fools, so {the} greatest among false Christians {are those} that are under the greatest advantage {to leave their folly}. This place {in Scripture shows this}.

Thus I have finished my discourse from this parable. [I have] shown that there are those two sorts [of Christians, wise and foolish].

[I have shown] in many particulars how they may agree, {and how they may} differ.

What an idea will these things {give}, if they {have} been duly attended, to give of both {kinds of believers}. How much tending to instruct, and to convince and affect. How nearly do all these things concern us.

We are the persons {spoken of in the parable}. All of us {are} convinced one way or the other. {We are} all either true or false
Christians.

How full are\(^7\) the holy Scriptures of instruction {and warning},
especially that revelation given by Christ, {as} appears by the abundant,
familiar instruction and warning given in this one parable.

Let us take heed to ourselves, lest all things should be written in
vain as to us, and all that has been spoken, spoken in vain. How
inexcusable {will we be}, if we continue in the way of the foolish
virgins, after so much plain instruction and such abundant warning. What
shame and everlasting contempt and aggravated punishment shall we expose
ourselves to, as not only foolish virgins, but some of the most foolish\(^8\)
and inexcusable [of] all mankind.
Notes

1 MS: “No. 9 Math 25. 1 ---t2------- 12. especially . v. 2.
2 MS: “their.”
3 MS: “& th."
4 This portion of the MS (L. 5) is made from a fragment of a child's response to a catechism question:

The answer to my Question is this
viz in Nahum 1 Ch & 4. v: He Rebuketh [the sea]
and maketh it dry & Isaiah 50: Ch 2 [At my]
Rebuke I dry up the sea & Psalms 10: [. . . Thy way]
is in the <sea> and thy Path in the Great water [Psalms 29]
3 the voice of the Lord is upon the waters [the God of glory]
thundereth the Lord is upon many wat[ers.]
Psalms 100: 7: v“: 29: He maketh the S[torm a calm]
so that the wates thereof are stil[l.]

5 MS = “Travailing.”
6 This point in the text coincides with leaves 10 and 11, which contain parts of a child’s response to catechism questions.

How often was the Temple Pillaged of its treasure
from the Time that it was built Till it
was burnt by the Chaldeans
The Answer is 7 Times:: once
By Shishak which we Have an
account of in the 12 of the 2 of Chron
att 9 verse Again we Have an account in the
25 of 2 Chron att: 23 24 verse of Joash
[. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] the Temple
[. . .]

This answer corresponds to no. 33 in “Questions for Young People.”
7 MS: “is.”
8 MS: “fool.”