

Wonderful Counselor - Unto Us Series
Pastor Deborah Oakley / 12-4-2016
Grace Fellowship Church

Pastor Joe and I have been married 42 years. Sometimes people ask us how we stayed together so long. Obviously our faith in God is one reason we stayed together. Also, we have both worked very hard to make it work.

But we really believe that going to counseling is another very significant reason. In the difficult times we never hesitated to get help. And we had some really wise and wonderful counselors.

They provided direction when we lost our way.
 They spoke truth when we were believing lies.
 They brought healing when we were broken.
 We've had some really wonderful counselors...

However, none of them even came close to the one and only wise and wonderful counselor. Jesus is our wonderful counselor. Yes, He uses people but all wise counsel comes from the one and only wise God.

When we were lost - He saved us.
 When we were lied to - He freed us.
 When we were broken - He healed us.
 He is our wonderful counselor.

Isaiah 9:6 says:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Today begins a new 4-part series titled "Unto Us."

My sermon today is titled "Wonderful Counselor." We will be looking at the attributes of God in Isaiah 9. First though, I want to give you some background.

Before Isaiah spoke about Jesus being born, he addressed the terrible situation in Israel. The people were in gross darkness and sin. Israel was experiencing great defeat. The people were oppressed, beaten and in bondage. Their enemies placed a bar across their shoulders to mark them as slaves in bondage. They would use a rod to beat them with. So things were pretty bleak.

And then Isaiah says... "For" unto us a child is born a Son is given. When Isaiah says "For" he is saying "for this reason." Because of the bondage of God's people – for this reason – a child – a Son and a Savior – will be born. Because my people need a Savior to deliver them.

I am sending a deliverer – a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father, a Prince of Peace.

Yes, there are battles, conflicts, and thick darkness everywhere. But for this reason I will send my Son. And the darkness will not prevail because in the midst of gross darkness there is a great light. Isaiah 9:2 says:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

This light is Jesus. Isaiah sees Jesus and describes Him as already come to deliver His people. Therefore, the yoke of oppression was removed. The bar across their shoulders and the rod that beat and enslaved them was removed. Their armor of war was laid aside. They were being dishonored but now they would be honored. God was now enlarging their nation and increasing their joy. Their joy is described as the joy one feels during harvest time. Harvest time was a time of great joy, singing, and celebrating a battle that was won. Their deliverance was a remarkable intervention of God. It was not accomplished by human strength; but by the power of God!

Today maybe you feel defeated or oppressed or in bondage. Maybe you're weary of the battles and you feel like giving up. For this reason – a child was born and a Son was given. Given to who? Us... For unto us a child was born and a Son was given. He was given to us. That means you and me.

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Prince of Peace, our Everlasting Father. He's come to deliver you from your enemies. He has shattered the yoke that burdened you, the bar across your shoulders, and the rod of your oppressor.

Yes, there are battles, conflicts, and thick darkness everywhere. BUT for this reason He sent us His Son. For this reason the darkness must flee for the light of His presence will shine forth.

So will you lay aside your armor of war? Will you stop trying to be strong all the time and trust in the strength of the Lord? Because your deliverance has come. Not by your strength but by the power of God.

Listen church...it's harvest time. It's time to sing and celebrate because your battles have been won. Your long oppression has ceased. And God is about to enlarge you and increase your joy. Can you praise Him right now?

So after Isaiah paints this picture of darkness followed by deliverance He begins describing the deliverer. He first describes Him as a child and a Son.

The reference of a child speaks of the humanity of Christ.
The reference of a Son speaks of the deity of Christ.
This tells us that Jesus was both God and man.

Then Isaiah lists four attributes of God's character. Today we're going to look at the first characteristic which is - Wonderful Counselor.

It's interesting to know that some translations say these are two characteristics: Jesus is wonderful AND He is our counselor. Some believe it's one characteristic: He's our wonderful counselor. I know Jesus is wonderful and He's our counselor, but I also believe He's our wonderful counselor so today I'll be talking about both.

You see a counselor is someone you go to for guidance and advice. Other names for counselor are shrink, therapist, psychotherapist, psychiatrist, advisor, or life coach.

Did you know that marriage is a psychological union? One of us is psycho and one of us is logical.

There are about half a million licensed therapists in the US. Americans spend about \$55 billion every year on psychotherapy and medication. You can get a good counselor or you can get a bad one.

Some people listen to the guidance and advice of all kinds of counselors. From Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, to Dr. Phil. Some listen to their horoscope, or their fortune teller. They think that "If these people say it - It must be true."

That's actually what was happening in Isaiah. Isaiah 8:19-20 says:

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Obviously this is not the kind of counsel God wants us to seek. He wants us to seek wise counsel. Proverbs 1:5 says:

A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

A wise person listens to many wise counselors and listens to the advice of people he trusts. Proverbs 11:14 says:

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

A wise child looks to his parents for advice.

A wise husband listens to the counsel of his wife ("Can I get an "amen?")

A wise woman listens to the counsel of her husband. ("Can I get another "amen?")

But no matter how good this counsel is... It's imperfect. Unless we are led by the Spirit of God we can unintentionally mislead people.

But God never misleads us.

He always knows exactly what we need.

He always knows exactly what to say.

He always knows exactly what not to say.

His counsel is perfect.

This is because He is omniscient which means He is all knowing and all wise.

He is so far beyond our comprehension that we will never figure Him out.

Isaiah 55:9 says:

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

This is why He is our Wonderful Counselor.

He does wonderful miracles by His wonderful power.

He is our wonderful teacher who leads us by His wonderful mercy and grace.

He counsels us by His wonderful love and compassion.

He releases us by His wonderful forgiveness and His wonderful sacrifice on the cross.

He is Wonderful in His Words, His Works and His Ways.

He is wonderful in all things.

Isaiah 28:29 says:

All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.

The Hebrew word for wonderful means to cause wonder and amazement.

It also means to distinguish or make great.

It is translated wonders - as in doing miracles.

He was wonderful in His birth, His humility, His self-denial, His sorrows His mighty works, His love and grace, His resurrection, His ascension and His counsel. So how does God counsel us?

He counsels us through His Word.

Look at what it says in Psalm 119:24

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

God counsels us through His written word. That's why it's so important to read your Bible.

He also counsels us through His Spirit.

In John 14:16 Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit.

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.

The Holy Spirit is our counselor. Then in John 16:13 Jesus says:

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.

He counsels us in truth. For example, have you ever had a verse of scripture come to you out of the blue? That's the Holy Spirit giving you counsel.

Or have you ever been reading your Bible and a verse just jumps off the page? That's the Holy Spirit giving you counsel.

Have you ever done something wrong and you feel convicted about it? That's the Holy Spirit giving you counsel.

God also counsels us through His People.

Many of you already know I was sexually abused by my step-father. In my younger years I just couldn't forgive him. If it hadn't been for my mentor- Anne Murchison- it would have taken me a lot longer than it did.

I can remember crying in her arms because I couldn't forgive. I wanted to but I couldn't. Anne never judged me for this. She would just gently remind me what the Bible said about forgiveness. It was her life message.

I remember her teaching on the parable of the servant whose master forgave him a debt of 10 thousand talents but he wouldn't forgive a fellow servant a debt of a hundred denarii. When his master found this out he turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he paid back all he owed. And this is how God will treat us unless we forgive each other from our heart.

I remember Anne teaching that story over and over. Eventually it sunk in and I was totally able to forgive my stepfather. God used Anne to counsel me. But I had to be willing to receive her counsel. Proverbs 15:22 says:

Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail; take good counsel and watch them succeed.

When someone gives you good advice you should follow it. One of the hardest things about pastoring is when people don't listen to Godly counsel. And honestly that happens more often than not.

Things like pride, selfishness, stubbornness, lack of submission to authority, fear, strongholds, unbelief, rebellion, or a hard heart can cause people to refuse good counsel. Hebrews 3:15-19 says:

As has just been said: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter His rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

One of the reasons the Children of Israel did not enter their promised land was because they heard the voice of God but they did not listen. They heard and rebelled. In this instance they heard through a person – Moses.

Pastor Joe and I have watched marriages fall apart and children hurt and wounded because people wouldn't listen to counsel. Remember - Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail. We've also seen marriages saved and children spared the pain of divorce because people did listen. Take good counsel and watch them succeed.

We've seen hearts broken by affairs because people wouldn't listen.
Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail.
And we've seen hearts mended when people did listen.
Take good counsel and watch them succeed.

I encourage you today if God has spoken and you want your plans to succeed, please listen.

Another way God counsels us is through His Voice.

Obviously we hear His voice through His word, His Spirit and His People. We also hear His voice in prayer. James 1:5 says:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

If we want to hear God we need to ASK Him for what we need.

Several years ago God gave me a word for someone during our Sunday morning service but I was unsure when to share it. When I went up to give the announcements I knew it was time. I almost didn't give it because worship was over, but I was compelled.

Here's the word I gave: "There's someone in the service who is struggling to make a decision. A door has opened and you're unsure if you should go through it. The answer is "Yes."

Immediately after church a woman came to me with tears in her eyes and said, "That word was for me. When you gave that word I HAD JUST FINISHED writing this prayer request to God."

Here's her request: "I need confirmation of direction in my life and if the move here is the right decision."

The minute she finished writing that prayer request I shared my word. God set into motion the answer to her prayer before she even asked.

On the prayer request form there is also a space for Praise Reports. Here's what was written: "I think Pastor Deborah gave an answer as I wrote the request."

Our part is to ask. We have not because we ask not.

God is our wonderful counselor. Whether He counsels us through His word, His Spirit, His people, or His voice - His counsel is wonderful.

We all have times in life when we need wisdom to make a decision, to answer a problem, to help a relationship.

And the key to wisdom is not just knowing something about some things - it's about knowing the One who knows everything about everything!

That's why unto us a child is born who is our wonderful counselor!

So - when you're lost and don't know which way to turn - go to Jesus - He's our wonderful counselor!

When you're clueless about what to do - go to Jesus - He's our wonderful counselor!

When you have questions no one can answer - go to Jesus - He's our wonderful counselor!