

Message #15

I Corinthians 3:18-23

Corinth was located 45 miles west of Athens, and many of the philosophical intellectuals actually visited Corinth and made a profound impact on people in the church. Some had actually become so impressed with humanistic philosophy and wisdom that they were actually propagating it in the church, thinking that this was the “intellectual” way of church thinking and the way to impress God.

Whenever any church equates worldly wisdom and success with biblical wisdom and success, there will be major problems of carnality just as in Corinth.

IT IS NOT ONE’S GRASP OF WORLDLY PHILOSOPHY AND WISDOM THAT MAKES ONE WISE; IT IS ONE’S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND ONE’S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S WORD THAT MAKES ONE WISE.

COMMAND #1 – Let no man deceive himself. **3:18a**

The word “deceive” speaks of an intense deception. The present tense of the verb indicates that there were those in the church who were continually deceiving themselves. Contextually the particular deception was that of equating worldly knowledge with spirituality.

Dr. Richard Lenski said a man who thinks he becomes wise by the wisdom and education of this world has a wisdom that is completely “imaginary” (Richard Lenski, *I Corinthians*, p. 151).

COMMAND #2 – Let a man become foolish. **3:18b-20**

This command is not a command for a believer to become stupid or foolish in life; it is a command designed to teach the Corinthians that God’s wisdom IS NOT found by adhering to vain philosophies of this world.

The world considers the true things of God to be foolish (1:21, 27). In other words, this command is one to become wise in the things of God which are foolish in the estimation of the world.

They thought their “scholarly” opinions were more intelligent than God’s revelation.

Reason #1 - Because of the divine perspective reason. **3:19a**

God’s perspective of this world’s philosophies and intellectual rationalisms is that they are nothing more than foolishness. Literally the word means God considers this world’s philosophical views as absolutely moronic.

Reason #2 - Because of the divine punishment reason. **3:19b**

Another reason why we should gravitate to godliness and remove ourselves from philosophical worldliness is because God will eventually “catch” the “wise” in their own craftiness. What this means is that God will eventually grab hold of deceivers and will judge them and use their own clever trickery as a basis for His judgment.

Another reason why we should gravitate to godliness and remove ourselves from philosophical worldliness is because God will eventually “catch” the “wise” in their own craftiness. What this means is that God will eventually grab hold of deceivers and will judge them and use their own clever trickery as a basis for His judgment.

Perhaps you think your sin, your deceit, your trickery, your rebellion, your cunning and your wisdom is fooling God. Friend, you will NEVER win.

Reason #3 - Because of the divine perceptive reason. **3:20**

No man is fooling God; He knows the very thoughts.

COMMAND #3 – Let no man boast in men. **3:21-23**

They were exulting or boasting about various unsaved, worldly men. These Corinthians had become completely enamored with the knowledge, the teachings and the wisdom of lost men, who were totally out of step with God.

Reason #1 - Because all things belong to the believer. **3:21-22**

1) Believers have been given spiritually gifted men. **3:22a**

2) Believers have been given the world. **3:22b**

What this means is that every believer holds the key to understanding this world and every believer will someday reign with Christ over this world.

3) Believers have been given life. **3:22c**

It is the believer who can make sense of life and discover true meaning.

4) Believers have been given death. **3:22d**

Only the believer can make any sense of death. Only the believer can understand the reason for death and have true hope in the face of death.

5) Believers have been given present things. **3:22e**

A true hope and confidence, a true understanding of present things can only be understood by the believer for it is only the believer who can correctly connect various events to God.

6) Believers have been given future things. **3:22f**

Only the believer can truly understand things pertaining to the future. Unbelievers can do nothing more than nonsensically speculate.

Reason #2 - Because all believers belong to God. **3:23**

If you want to brag about someone or something, brag about all the people you know at church who are in God's family, that have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When you find humble believers who love God and His Word and obey God and His Word, you have found true wisdom and true success, not in the sight of this foolish world but in the sight of God.