

Series: 1 Corinthians
Title: Let No Man Deceive Himself
Text: 1 Cor 3: 18-20
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1 Cor 3: 18: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20: And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Wisdom is the guide of all men. There is the wisdom of this world of our flesh which God calls foolishness and vain. There is the Wisdom from above, Christ our Wisdom, the wisdom declared in the word of God, the wisdom God gives in the heart. These two kinds of wisdom are as different as night and day.

James 3: 13: Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14: But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15: This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. 16: For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. 17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Proposition: If we mistake the foolishness of this world and of our carnal flesh for true wisdom then our core principles will be perverted and we will greatly err. So our text exhorts us to forsake all self-wisdom that we may be wise in the wisdom of God.

SELF-DECEIVING

Self-wisdom is self-deceiving—I **Corinthians 3: 18: Let no man deceive himself.**

The Holy Spirit would not have moved Paul to give this warning to believers if we did not need it. The natural man is dead in sin so he must be born and taught of God to be saved from his self-deception. But every believer must be saved by God from our self-deception, too. Our natural, fleshly heart, is the greatest of all deceivers.

Jeremiah 17: 9. The heart is deceitful above all *things* and desperately wicked, who can know it?

So whatever the situation we find ourselves in if God is converting us from unbelief to faith. If God is putting us through a trial, if there be a quarrel between believers, if we have some great decision to make, if we are torn between showing mercy or being hard judges of one another, if a brother is being called to the ministry or as the context speaks, if we are preachers. No matter the situation, may God give us grace to heed this solemn warning—"Let no man deceive himself." Self-wisdom is self-deceiving!

Proverbs 3:5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

FORSAKE OUR WISDOM FOR GOD'S WISDOM

If we find ourselves leaning to our own vain wisdom then we must forsake it for the wisdom of God—I **Cor 3: 18: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.**

When God gives a sinner divine Wisdom, God makes his child do three things. One, he make us acknowledge our own ignorance—“if any man seemeth to be wise.” Our wisdom only *seemeth* like wisdom. God makes us acknowledge our ignorance. Two, God makes us take our place as a fool—in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world—“let him become a fool.” Three, God makes us submit our reason to the teaching of Divine wisdom—“that he may be wise” in God, in Christ our Wisdom.

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” I want to expound this verse by looking at 6 scriptures—where God warns us not to deceive ourselves.

BE NO DECEIVED CONCERNING SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

First, be not deceived, no unrighteous sinner shall enter heaven. There is one who makes his people fit to enter the kingdom of heaven—**1 Cor 6: 9: Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10: Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11: And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.**

No sinner shall enter the kingdom of God and each of us here are guilty sinners if left to ourselves.

Revelation 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

So where do we behold God’s Wisdom in saving unrighteous sinners like us while being just and the Justifier? Do we behold it by our own wisdom? No! This wisdom never entered the heart of man! That should teach us not to look to our own wisdom in anything.

We are made to behold God’s wisdom when the Spirit of God washes us and sanctifies us—we were dead in sins, ignorant, we had to be given life, faith and taught of God. Then through faith God makes Christ Wisdom unto us, by making us behold the Lord Jesus in whom God is just and Justifier.

The Wisdom of God is that God is just to save his elect because he poured out his fury on all his people when Christ died on the cross in our place. The Wisdom of God is that God is also the Justifier because God was in Christ justifying his people from our sins. This is the Wisdom of God, this is Christ our Wisdom—God making mercy and truth meet in harmony in Christ on the cross. God making is to that no sinner can have any room to boast—our righteousness is of God, the Lord our Righteousness.

So we behold the truth that salvation is of the Lord where?—not in our wisdom—but in God’s word! In Christ and him crucified! Through the Holy Spirit of God! Through God given faith. “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

BE NOT DECEIVED ABOUT EVIL COMPANIONS

Secondly, be not deceived about believers being companions of unbelievers—**1 Corinthians 15:33: Be not deceived: evil communications [evil companionships] corrupt good manners.**

“A man may seemeth wise in this world” as he rejects this wisdom of God for his own understanding. He may decide this is not necessarily so. But is it wisdom to reject God’s word? No sir!

This word is the wisdom of God—“Be not deceived: [let no man deceive himself] evil [companionships] corrupt good manners. Where do we find this wisdom? In us? No. We find it in God’s holy word. “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

BE NOT DECEIVED IN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Thirdly, be not deceived with a self-righteous opinion of yourself—**Galatians 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.**

When I have a brother—one for whom Christ gave his blood—who is overtaken in a fault. There is no doubt the brother is at fault, no doubt he is overtaken. Maybe he has done something to me, to my child, to my family members.

The wisdom of God says I am to consider myself. I am to consider that my own faults are worse than the fault of my brother. I am to consider that Christ laid down his life for me and God has forgiven me for Christ’s sake—the same as my brother who is at fault. If I do not think consider and know it is true of myself then I will be tempted to uncover my brother’s sin, to accuse him while I exalt myself in self-righteousness. And if I do such a wicked thing, I am only deceiving myself—“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

After considering that I am the chief of sinners then what does God say I am to do? “Restore such a one”—it means mend what is broken, strengthen him with the gospel, forgive for Christ’s sake even as God has forgiven you. I am to do so “in the spirit of meekness.” The heart’s motive is the most important thing. So I am to do so as a broken contrite sinner in need of grace my own self. I am to “Bear ye”—put upon one’s self—“one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” This is what Christ has done for his people. Christ made himself the least, took our sins and restored us with his righteousness. So this is the law of Christ—the law of his house, the law of love and mercy.

Now, will it be the wisdom of God if I disregard this word and exalt myself by casting blame on my brother? By being petty and vindictive? If I do so I say I am more wise than Christ! “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

BE NOT DECEIVED CONCERNING GOD’S KNOWLEDGE

Fourthly, be not deceived concerning God’s knowledge of all things—**Galatians 6: 6: Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8: For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9: And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.**

God knows if we are sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit. God knows all things. Our text says “God knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.” “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.”

That is good news for the believer who uses what God has given him to promote the gospel of Christ, to care for his brethren and for all men. It is good news to the believer who obeys all of this word of God. Why?

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb 6: 10) “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

But is it wisdom if I imagine that I can use the things God has given to live for my flesh and somehow fool God? No. “God is not mocked!” God is just—“for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Notice verse 8 “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

BE NOT DECEIVED ABOUT YOUR RELIGION

Fifthly, be not deceived about your religion—**James 1: 22: But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23: For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 25: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty 26: If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. 27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.**

The forgetful hearer is a man who deceives himself. Oh, he hears the gospel. He knows the true doctrine of grace: T.U.L.I.P. But he forgets that the word showed him that he is a helpless sinner and that Christ is the only Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption of his people. So right away he goes out and acts like he never heard of depravity and our need of God’s grace. His tongue is unbridled in self-righteous, judgment of others. He boasts and glories in himself. This man thinks he needs no mercy from God so he has no love and mercy for needy brethren. He has no desire to be separated from this sinful world but acts like the world and loves to be with the world more than God’s people. “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

Yet, wisdom given from God bows to God’s word. The doer flees to Christ for forgiveness, and continues trusting the Redeemer and looking into his word. By God’s grace his bridled tongue comes from the heart broken and contrite like a little child by God’s grace. He can’t condemn others because he sees what a sinner he is so he glories only in the Lord. He needs mercy so he shows mercy, helping and visiting needy sinners. He longs to be with Christ and away from this sinful, defiling world.

BE NOT DECEIVED CONCERNING OUR SIN

Sixthly, be not deceived concerning our sin—**1 John 1: 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

If the truth is in me, by God’s grace, then I will bow to God’s word, confess my sins to God and seek his mercy. Verse 9 says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

So do you see how our text applies to all those warnings? Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking our worldly, fleshly wisdom is better than God’s Wisdom—**1 Cor 3: 18: Let no man deceive himself. If any**

man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool [in this world, to this world] that he may be wise. 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

Notice, the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot look to our wisdom and to God's wisdom.—**1 Cor 3: 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.**

Let's read a passage where Paul got this quote from Job—

Job 5: 8-16 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: 9: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: 10: Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11: To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. 12: He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise. 13: He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14: They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noontday as in the night. 15: But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16: So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth. (Job 5:8-16)

Here is the quote from Psalms—

Psalm 94: 8: Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9: He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? 10: He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?* 11: The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity. 12: Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; [thy word] 13: That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14: For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. (Ps 94:8-14)

Amen!