

Not Enthralled with This World's Wisdom
1 Corinthians 3:18

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 reads, “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. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”

As we considered the instruction from **2 Corinthians 6:17** to come out from among the world and be separate, we learned from **Psalms 1:1** that if we desire to walk in the blessing of our Lord's fellowship, then we must not walk in the counsel of this ungodly world. Even so, **1 Corinthians 3:18** gives the warning and instruction, “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.” The wisdom of this world is NOT a positive ingredient for our Christian walk. “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” If we desire to learn true wisdom, then we must cast aside this world's wisdom. Indeed, we must become fools in relation to the wisdom of this world, in order that we may become wise in relation to the wisdom of God.

I. The Nature of This World's Wisdom

The reason that we must become fools in relation to this world's wisdom is because the wisdom of this world is not at all godly. Even so, **James 3:14-16** reveals the nature of this world's wisdom, saying, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” The earthly wisdom of this world does not find its source from the Lord our God above. Rather, the wisdom of this world is “devilish,” being engendered by that wicked one himself. In addition, the wisdom of this world is “sensual,” being energized by the principle of self-interest and selfish desire. For this reason, the wisdom of this world produces the fruit of “bitter envying and strife” in our behavior. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts [even of your selfish desires and selfish interests] that war in your members?” (James 4:1) Such is the very nature of this world's wisdom.

II. The Foolishness of This World's Wisdom

Thus the wisdom of this world does not lead unto the wholesome ways of godliness. Rather, the wisdom of this world leads unto the foolish ways of ungodliness. In **Romans 1:20-23** God's Word speaks concerning this world and its supposed wisdom, saying, “For the invisible things of him [of God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” At its very core, the wisdom of this world is against the Lord our God. It either

disregards the authority of God and His truth as much as possible; or it develops its own ideas about God and His truth unto its own liking; or it rejects the reality of God and His truth altogether. As this world becomes more filled with its own wisdom and imaginations, it actually becomes more and more empty of spiritual and godly truth. As it becomes more “enlightened” in its own conceits, it actually becomes more overcome by spiritual darkness. Indeed, because of its supposed wisdom this world does not know God. (See **1 Corinthians 1:21**) Furthermore, in its supposed wisdom this world “crucified the Lord of glory.” (See **1 Corinthians 2:8**) Finally, by its supposed wisdom this world rejects the glorious gospel of Christ. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.” (**1 Corinthians 1:17a**) Yea, through its supposed wisdom this world completely misses the true wisdom of God’s Holy Word and the wholesome doctrine of godliness. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (**1 Corinthians 2:14**) So then, the wisdom of this world cannot at all be helpful for us believers in our walk of godliness and true holiness.

III. The Contrast of God’s True Wisdom

In addition, just as the world in its supposed wisdom views the true wisdom of God as foolishness, even so the Lord our God has judged the wisdom of this world as true foolishness. “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” (**1 Corinthians 3:19**) In relation to all of this world’s supposed cleverness and craftiness, the Lord our God uses that very cleverness and craftiness of this world to accomplish His victory over it. Thereby the Lord our God reveals that He stands in power and wisdom far above all that this world could ever image. “And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” (**1 Corinthians 3:20**) Indeed, the Lord our God knows and understands every thought of the supposed wisest in this world; and He has discerned the depths of those thoughts to be completely vain and empty in value. “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (**1 Corinthians 1:19-20**) This is the judgement of the Lord our God against the wisdom of this world. He will destroy it and bring it to nothing. He will reveal it to be the foolishness that it truly is. “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” (**1 Corinthians 1:25-29**)

IV. The Riches of God’s True Wisdom

Indeed, the depth of the riches of God’s wisdom is especially and wonderfully revealed in the gospel of Christ. Certainly, through its supposed wisdom this world views the gospel of Christ as foolishness. Yet that very gospel of Christ is the power and wisdom of God unto eternal salvation for everyone that believes on Christ as personal Savior. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (**1 Corinthians 1:18**) “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew

not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” (**1 Corinthians 1:21-24**) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (**Romans 11:33-36**) So then, let us not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ and His cross. Let us not allow the viewpoint of this world’s empty wisdom to influence our mindset against the power and wisdom of the gospel. Rather, let us boldly hold forth the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and His crucifixion as the power and wisdom of God that it truly is.

V. The Focus of God’s True Wisdom

Indeed, let us recognize that the focus of God’s true wisdom is centered upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself. Speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, **Colossians 2:3** declares, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Thus **1 Corinthians 1:23-24** proclaims, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of God’s power and wisdom for us believers. Even so, **1 Corinthians 1:30-31** adds, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” For this very reason, **Colossians 2:6-7** gives the instruction, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” As we walk in abiding fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” we become more spiritually rooted and built up in Him. Then as we become more spiritually rooted and built up in our Lord Jesus Christ, we also become more established and abundantly fruitful in the faith, that is – in the wisdom of God and godliness. For this very reason, **Colossians 2:8** further adds the warning, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” The wisdom and philosophy of this world is not at all a help to our abiding fellowship with Christ and our spiritual growth in godliness. Rather, because the wisdom and philosophy of this world is not after Christ, but is after self, it is hindrance to our abiding fellowship with Christ and our spiritual growth in godliness. Therefore, we must not be enthralled with the wisdom of this world.

VI. The Gospel without This World’s Wisdom

In fact, we must be especially careful not to employ the wisdom of this world in our gospel witness. Even so, in **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** the apostle Paul testified concerning his own gospel witness unto the Corinthians, saying, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not

with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Indeed, just as in the case of the apostle Paul, our gospel witness should not be filled with the supposed excellency of this world's wisdom. Rather, in our gospel witness we should determine not to know anything among the lost, except Jesus Christ as God's only begotten Son, and Him crucified as the only Savior of sinners. Indeed, our gospel witness should not be filled with the arrogance of intellectual superiority and contentious argumentation. Rather, our gospel witness should be with the godliness of gracious meekness and patient gentleness. Indeed, our gospel witness should not be filled with the enticing words of this world's wisdom. Rather, our gospel witness should be in demonstration of God's Spirit and power. Indeed, this all is spiritually necessary, in order that the faith of those who believe on Christ through our gospel witness might not stand in the wisdom of this world, but in order that their faith might stand in the power of God Himself. Certainly then, if the words and methods of this world's wisdom would cause the faith of a convert to stand in the wisdom of the world rather than in the power God, our gospel witness should not at all involve the wisdom of this world in its presentation.

VII. The Revelation of God's True Wisdom

Yet we should pursue the depth of God's true wisdom in our own study for our own spiritual edification and in our ministry unto fellow believers for their spiritual edification. Even so, the apostle Paul testified in **1 Corinthians 2:6**, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought." However, this wisdom is most certainly not to be the wisdom of this world, but is rather to be the true wisdom of God. Thus the apostle Paul continued in **1 Corinthians 2:7-9**, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This is the depth of spiritual wisdom that the Lord our God is hidden away from this spiritually lost world, even as **1 Corinthians 2:14** indicates, "But the natural [spiritually lost] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is the depth of spiritual wisdom that has not entered into the heart of even the wisest of this spiritually lost world.

On the other hand, this is the depth of spiritual wisdom that the Lord our God has ordained for our glory as His own people and that He has prepared for His faithful servants that love Him. Indeed, this is the depth of spiritual wisdom that the Lord our God has revealed unto us through His Holy Spirit, even as **1 Corinthians 2:10-12** states, "But God hath revealed them [His wisdom] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things [the wisdom] of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things [the wisdom] that are freely given to us of God." Yea, this is the depth of spiritual wisdom that the Lord our God has revealed unto us through His Holy Spirit inspired Word. Even so, the apostle Paul testified in **1 Corinthians 2:13**, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing

spiritual things with spiritual.” The truth and teaching of God’s Holy Word is not the wisdom which this world teaches. Rather, the truth and teaching of God’s Holy Word is the wisdom which the Holy Spirit teaches. It reveals depths of God’s true wisdom for our lives. Indeed, the truth and teaching of God’s Holy Word is our wisdom and understanding in the sight of this world around us. (See **Deuteronomy 4:5-6**) Indeed, it is the perfect purity of the truth and teaching in God’s Holy Word alone that can convert the character of our souls and that can give us true understanding and wisdom in godly living. (See **Psalms 19:7-8**)

VIII. The Nature of God’s True Wisdom

This is the nature of God’s true wisdom. It is thoroughly righteous and godly in its character and direction, and it is utterly against any and all unrighteousness and ungodliness. Even so, in **Proverbs 8:6-14** the personified wisdom of God declares, “Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.” In like manner, **James 3:17-18** proclaims, “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. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

IX. Rejecting This World’s Wisdom

So then, because this world’s wisdom by its very nature is ungodly and against the Lord our God, we must reject that wisdom as a guide for our lives. Indeed, we now return unto the warning and instruction of **1 Corinthians 3:18** wherewith we began, “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.” If we are filled with the wisdom of this world, we must not deceive ourselves as believers into thinking that we are truly wise thereby. Rather, if we are filled with the wisdom of this world, we must seek to become fools in the wisdom of this world. Yea, we must seek to become fools in this world’s wisdom specifically in order that we might become truly wise in the true wisdom of the Lord our God. We must ever beware that we not become spoiled from the fellowship, wisdom, and blessings of Christ through the wisdom of this world. Even so, **Colossians 2:8** gives the warning, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” The wisdom of this world is after the ideas and tradition of men, not after the fellowship and abiding of Christ. Thus the wisdom of this world will feed us and fill us with empty and deceitful philosophies, and will thereby spoil us from the abundant Christian life that we might have in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us beware! Let us ever be on our guard against the wisdom of this world to reject with zeal any manner in which it might seek to influence our hearts. Indeed, **1 Timothy 6:3-5** instructs us to withdraw ourselves from any teacher or teaching that is contrary to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ and “to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” According to God’s Word, such teachers

of this world's wisdom are "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." From such teachers and teaching we must withdraw ourselves. Such teaching we must utterly reject!

X. Pursuing God's True Wisdom

On the other hand, we must give ourselves wholeheartedly to pursue the true wisdom of the Lord our God. In **Ephesians 5:15-17** we are instructed, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." This present world is a world of spiritual darkness and evil, and every day in this world we must face that darkness and evil. Therefore, we need to walk carefully each day with depth of spiritual wisdom, in order that we might not be overcome and ensnared by that spiritual darkness and evil. Indeed, we need to walk each day according to the true wisdom of our Lord's will. Yet where shall we find the light of our Lord's wise will, whereby we may walk wisely and carefully in the spiritual darkness of this world? The psalmist in **Psalms 119:105** gives answer, speaking about God's Holy Word and saying, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Even so, we are instructed by the opening portion of **Colossians 3:16**, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Indeed, it is through the truth and wisdom of God's Word that we shall find the light of our Lord's wise will, whereby we may walk without being destroyed by the spiritual darkness and evil of this world.

So then, we must give ourselves wholeheartedly to learn the truth and wisdom of God's Word and then to live according to that truth and wisdom. Such is the instruction of **Proverbs 2:1-9**, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words [that is – the words of God's Holy Word], and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." Just as **Psalms 1:1** indicates that we are not to walk in the counsel and wisdom of this ungodly world, even so **Psalms 1:2** indicates that we are instead to delight and meditate in God's Word all throughout every day. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Thus the personified wisdom of God's Word declares in **Proverbs 8:32-36**, "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."