

Sunday, February 21, 2016—I Corinthians 3:18-21a: Let No Man Glory in Men

### Introduction

- Last week during our time together we looked at verses 16 and 17. Verse 16 afforded us the opportunity to look at the fact that believers both individually (I Cor. 6:19-20) and corporately (I Cor. 3:16) are the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Both of these are present realities for those who have trusted in the finished work of Christ.
- Regarding verse 17, after touching upon some interpretive facts with respect to the verse, I presented two different ways that rightly dividing Pauline dispensationalists have understood the verse.
  - Verse 17 is talking about believers defiling the temple of God and being destroyed.
  - Verse 17 is talking about unbelievers defiling the temple of God and being destroyed.
- I said last week that I could be persuaded either way but that the language “him shall God destroy” in verse 17 trips me up. It seems to be suggesting the destruction one’s person whereas verse 15 is clearly dealing with the destruction of the believer’s works but still has the believer being saved “yet so as by fire.”
- This morning I want to continue our exposition of the passages and look at the following verses.

### I Corinthians 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.**
- However one views the first part of verse 17, the second part is not in dispute. Paul’s ends verse 17 by reiterating the twin facts presented in verse 16 that the Corinthians are (present tense) the temple of God and that Holy Spirit dwells (present tense) within them.
- *Let no man deceive himself*—is an imperative statement. Paul is literally saying don’t allow yourself to be deceived.
  - I Corinthians 6:9
  - I Corinthians 15:33
  - Galatians 6:7

- The function of this statement at the head of verse 18 is to serve as a warning for the reader regarding what he says next.
- *If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool*—once again this is any indicative statement of FACT. Paul is not saying that there might be people at Corith that “seemeth to be wise in this world” he is stating the FACT that there are. Thus the warning at the beginning of the verse.
- I Corinthians 1:22—we already know from our study of Chapter 1 that as Gentiles the Corinthians possessed a propensity to be enamored with the wisdom of this world.
- *let him become a fool*—the one who seems “to be wise in this world” is instructed to “become a fool.” How does one become a fool? By leaving the wisdom of this world and embracing the foolishness of God.
- I Corinthians 1:18-24, 27-28—when one embraces the truth of God’s word they will automatically become a fool in the eyes of the world. One becomes a fool by embracing, supporting, and propagating what the wisdom of this world views a foolishness.
- Paul is imperatively instructing the Corinthians who “seemeth to be wise in this world” to become fools. Why?
- *that he may be wise*—give the purpose and the intent. Why should they become fools? That they might be wise. True wisdom is only found in the wisdom of God. Paul says that by embracing what the world considers to be foolish the believer actually becomes wise
- I Corinthians 1:25
- The verb “might be” at the end of the verse is in the subjunctive mood. Meaning that whether or not one actually leaves the wisdom of this world and becomes wise is up in the air and will be determined by one’s own individual decision. That being said, however, one must become a fool in order to be wise.

### **I Corinthians 3:19**

- **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.**
- *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*—reiterates what we have already studied this morning and reviewed from chapter 1.
- The second part of verse 19 is a quotation from Job 5:13. The English word “craftiness” means “Artfulness; dexterity in devising and effecting a purpose; cunning; artifice; stratagem,” according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*.

- God’s wisdom so far exceeds the wisdom of the world that God is able to take wise and beat them at their own game.
- Ezekiel 28:1-4—Satan’s original boast what that he was wiser than God and that no secret could be hid from him.
- I Corinthians 2:7-8—God concealed his wisdom in a mystery so that he could take the wise one in his own craftiness. If Satan and his minions had known about the wisdom of God in a mystery they never would crucified the Lord of glory.
- Colossians 2:14-15—through the cross our Lord Jesus Christ, the Godhead spoiled and triumphed over Satan and his cohorts and put them to open shame by demonstrating the superiority of God’s wisdom. God took Satan in his own “craftiness.”
- I Corinthians 3:19—now if God in his wisdom could take Satan in his own craftiness all the philosophical scheming of man is not match for the wisdom of God.

### **I Corinthians 3:20**

- **And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.**
- This verse is a quotation from Psalm 94:11 and confirms Paul’s estimation of the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world with all of its eloquent philosophical reasoning is vain.

### **I Corinthians 3:21**

- **Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;**
- *Therefore let no man glory in men*—here we reach the conclusion of Paul’s argument in this chapter. The Corinthians should not be glorying in men.
- I Corinthians 1:10-13—recall that Paul had heard of their man following factions and the contentions that had arisen among them as a result.
- I Corinthians 3:3-8—the human instrument is not the issue God gives the increase.
- According to chapter 3 the Corinthians should not be glorying in men for the following reasons:
  - Verse 3—it is carnal and immature thinking.
  - Verses 5-8—Paul and Apollos are one in planting and watering and are in themselves nothing but ministers. God is the one gives the increase and brings forth spiritual life.

- Verses 9-15—each believer will individually give an account of how they built upon the foundation laid by Paul. Consequently, they ought not be following men but building soberly upon the foundation as individuals who are responsible for their own labor.
- Verses 18-20—man following is a byproduct of the wisdom of this world and not the wisdom of God.