"A Word to the Wise"

I Corinthians 3:18 - 4:5

3-19-2023

INTRODUCTION:

***You can be wise, as God measures "wisdom"!**

You are wise when you. . .

I. **Trade in <u>MAN'S</u> wisdom for <u>GOD'S</u> wisdom** (v. 18-20)
(A word to the wise: *"Don't <u>measure yourself</u> with men")*

You are wise when you. . .

II. **Benefit from <u>ALL</u> God has to offer** (v. 21-23)
(A word to the wise: *"Don't <u>limit yourself</u> to a man")*

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III. **Realize the <u>GREATNESS</u> of <u>FAITHFUL SERVITUDE</u>** (4:1-2)
(A word to the wise: *"Don't <u>think too much</u> of men")*

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IV. **Stand <u>UNINTIMIDATED</u> by man's judgment,
but live in anticipation of God's judgment** (4:3-5)
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What is Wisdom? Wisdom is the perception of God's thoughts and insight into God's ways resulting in an accurate understanding of truth and manifesting itself in the art of skillful living.

How is Wisdom obtained? The attainment of wisdom is achieved by means of:

1) The "fear" of the Lord (Respect for God) (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 9:10)
2) The Word of the Lord (The Written and Living Logos)
   (The written Word – Prov. 4:5; Psalm 119:130)
   (The Living Word – Col. 2:3; 1 Cor. 1:24)

Just Ask God for Wisdom believing that He is the source and dispenser of Wisdom (James 1:5)

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I. Trade in <u>MAN'S</u> wisdom for <u>GOD'S</u> wisdom (v. 18-20)
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V. 18

Many people are self-deceived when it comes to true "wisdom." They delude themselves into thinking that if they can reason like the world's great rationalists, if they can quote the world's great philosophers, if they can argue like the world's great apologists. . . then truly they must have wisdom.

We are so prone to seek wisdom from the world rather than from God.
Many assume that people of notoriety are the source of wisdom (a famous guru or religious leader; A professor from an ivy league university etc.) In the days of ancient Greece Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates were looked to as the source of wisdom. While they had many good insightful things to say, none were infallible and none knew God's way of salvation for His ways of successful living.

While many in our day assume that popular opinion is the source of wisdom. If enough people believe something then it must be true. But is popular opinion the test of rightness?

With the amazing technological advancements of our day many others assume that if it's on the internet then it must be true; If an answer is spit out from a program of artificial intelligence then it must be true.

God's ways may seem foolish to the world. Outdated; archaic; Foolish;
Many deem His ways as unworthy of our consumption or adaptation because they are so vastly different from the times in which we live. But remember this: He says that His ways are not our ways. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

The Bible has a lot of apparent paradoxes. It teaches us that:

--The way up is down (Lk. 11:14)
(Humility before exaltation)

--The way to greatness is servitude (Mt. 20:26, 27)

--The way to be wise is to be a fool

"Let him become a fool" - Not a "fool" in the eyes of God, but a fool in the eyes of the world.

Until you are willing to allow the world to view your beliefs, principles, ideals, etc., as foolish, pride will forever keep you from pursuing and attaining God's wisdom.

ILLUS: The man who walked the streets of Manhattan wearing a sign on his chest and back. On the front it read: "I AM A FOOL FOR CHRIST." On the back: "WHOSE FOOL ARE YOU?"

The greatest fault a man can have is to be aware of none (to see none in his life).

Spiritual growth does not occur in the life of one who thinks he has "arrived." It occurs in the one who, in honest evaluation of himself, sees himself as fallible, able to err, able to be short-sighted.

V. 18-20

Have you ever said to God, "Lord, change any thoughts, ideas, philosophies, ambitions in me that are not in line with yours?" (Isaiah 55:8-9 - *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.")*.

Is your mind all "made up"? Or are you open to truth?

How willingly do you take constructive criticism and thank God for it?

What does it take for God to change your mind?

Always have a tender, pliable, open heart to God. The day it closes, is the day life stops for you. Growth ceases and death begins.

V. 19

"It is difficult to teach a person who thinks he knows everything. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian said of some of his students,

'They would doubtlessly have become excellent scholars
if they had not been so fully persuaded of their own scholarship.'

A well-known Arab proverb goes:
'He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool. Shun him.
He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is simple. Teach him'."
(MacArthur, p. 89).

God in His mercy often has to humble a man before He can teach that man anything.

The most intelligent university professor who lacks God's intelligence is really foolish with God.

All true wisdom is God's wisdom -- wisdom He has chosen to reveal to man via the Bible.

Paul cites Job 5:13 to make his point.

A man's own wise ideas end up tripping him up.

--Like a boomerang, those philosophies by which he sought to corrupt others and ruin their faith, end up damning his own soul.

--Like Haman's gallows, he ends up hanging himself by his own schemes.

V. 20

Now Paul refers to Psalm 94:11.

"Vain" has the idea of <u>futility</u>, <u>fruitlessness</u>, <u>without result</u> (a lot of empty jargon.

The thoughts of this world's wise don't result in anything which will last for eternity. Their wisdom is limited to things which will pass away.

"The worldly wise, whom the Corinthians held in such high esteem, are totally unable to penetrate the divine mysteries. These are open to the humblest man of faith, but are forever hid from the wise of this world." (Morris, p. 71)

You are wise when you. . .

II. Benefit from <u>ALL</u> God has to offer (v. 21-23)
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V. 21

The Corinthians were <u>divided</u> over their favorite teacher's popularity, personality, giftedness, or style (cp. 1:12; 3:4, 5).

"Let no man glory in men" - None of us should <u>boast</u> about a man. Brag about God -- Yes! Brag about God's servant -- No!
Regarding your local church pastor, Honor them? Yes; Listen to them? Yes; Follow their leadership? Yes; Worship them? NO

To pledge one's allegiance to a particular charismatic preacher is totally carnal.
The celebrity syndrome in Christianity is sickening.

We should not divide over personalities (like the Corinthians did). It is foolish to be a loyalist to one TV or radio personality, or to one author (commentary writer).

All men are short-sighted, fallible; none is perfect in every area of Bible knowledge. So to limit yourself to one guru, or one famous teacher is the height of foolishness -- It is <u>cultic</u>!

"For <u>all</u> things are yours" - Don't limit yourself to just one man (one teacher of truth) when you can benefit from <u>all</u> (cp. 4:15).

V. 22

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas (Peter)" - Don't pick one from the exclusion of the others when you can gain blessings from all (Paul no doubt could fill their tank with doctrine, Apollos with enthusiasm, and Peter with practical experience).

"No believer has an exclusive claim to truth." God has gifted many people with His wisdom.

"The world" - Since God owns all, and we belong to God, we will inherit the earth one day -- in the Millennium (Mt. 5:5; Rev. 20:6). We are *"joint heirs"* with Christ! (Rom. 8:17)

"Life or death" - By faith the believer has victory over life and death.

--The abundant life belongs to us (Jn. 10:10).

--Triumph over death belongs to us (since we belong to the One who has the keys of death -- Jesus Christ) (Rev. 1:18)

While death is the end of all things for the lost, death is <u>gain</u> for believers (Phil. 1:21; I Cor. 15:55-57).

"Things present or things to come" - The blessings of God now and the blessings of God for the future, all belong to us -- the children of God. (We are part of the King's family, we are part of royalty! *"No good thing will He withhold from them which walk uprightly."*)

V. 23

"All is yours" for this reason: You belong to Christ!

In Christ we are blessed with *"all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places"* (Eph. 1:3).

Everything that belongs to Christ belongs to you by virtue of your relationship to Him (EX: When I got married, all my belongings became Terri's and vice-versa).

"Christ is God's" - Christ has everything God (the Father) has because of His relationship to the Father. He is one with the Father; hence, He has everything the Father has. (Ex. To be in Christ's hand is to be in the Father's hand - John 10:29)

If I belong to Christ and He belongs to the Father, what lack I?

So Paul's point is this: Don't limit yourself when you belong to One who has the vast resources of the universe to help you, train you, equip you, etc.

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III. Realize the <u>GREATNESS</u> of <u>FAITHFUL SERVITUDE</u> (4:1-2)
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V. 1

"Let a man so (in this way) ***account of us" -*** Paul says, "When you think about Apollos, Peter, and I, don't have grandiose, bigger than life, superman images in your minds. Rather, have a mental reckoning of us as <u>servants</u> and <u>stewards</u>.

Just view us as humble servants (serving another Master) and humble stewards (caring for Another's possessions).

"Ministers" - *huperetas* - under-rowers. The word was used to refer to the slaves who would row on the lower part of a ship which had three banks of oars.

Paul says, "View me as a hard-working slave for Christ."

True greatness, according to Jesus, is being a servant. The more you serve, the greater you are (SEE: Mt. 20:25-28).

"Stewards" - *oikonomous* - manager; one who would manage or take care of the household belongings of a master (EX: Joseph in Potiphar's house).

Paul was responsible to manage the mysteries of God (i.e. the formerly hidden, but now revealed revelation of God).

V. 2

The key requirement of a steward is not good looks, charismatic personality, charm and wit, but faithfulness to the task.

"<u>Faithful</u>" - One you can put "<u>full faith</u>" in; reliable, dependable ("The greatest ability is dependability" - Bob Jones, Sr.).

As Christ looks at you, does He find you to be faithful? Can He count on you to get a job done the way He wants it done? Will Jesus say of you, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant"* (Mt. 25:21)?

To be smart, you must realize that the greatest men of God are great at serving Christ.

"You are wise when you. . .

IV. Stand <u>UNINTIMIDATED</u> by man's judgment, but live in anticipation of God's judgment (4:3-5)
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V. 3

Have you ever been unjustly criticized?

Don't allow your life to be manipulated by man's opinions or criticisms.

"With me" - Some people might be more intimidated by the scrutiny (magnifying glass examinations) of others than Paul was.

It was of little importance to Paul that others judged him and criticized him. He did not live to please people, but a higher standard. Paul was not swayed by peer pressure.

"Or of man's judgment" - lit. "of man's day." It was God's day of judgment that concerned Paul.

Because they seek to live up to man's expectations and wishes, many people are:

--Wishy-washy (vacillate back and forth - seeking to please all)

--Paranoid (worried about what others think)

--Self-satisfied (when they compare themselves with others' ministry and effort, they look pretty good, so they stop [remain stunted])

"Yea, I judge not mine own self" - Paul didn't waste his life in constant introspection (his focus was <u>up</u>, not <u>in</u>)

"This does <u>not</u> mean that there is no place for times of heart-searching and rigid self-scrutiny with a view to more whole-hearted and more efficient service" (Morris, p. 75).

What Paul is saying is that his own judgment of himself may be flawed; the Lord's is the only 100% accurate evaluation he would receive (v. 4).

V. 4

"For I know nothing by myself" - I do not know anything about myself, that I am doing wrong; lit. I know nothing about myself.

"Yet am I <u>not</u> hereby justified" - Just because I can't see any flaws in my life or ministry, does <u>not</u> mean that <u>none exist</u>.

I'm not right just because I think I'm right.

The One who determines whether or not I am right is the Lord.

As Paul evaluated his life, he saw himself as a faithful steward; however, he recognized that only God can determine how faithful we really were in this life.

We all tend to build ourselves up in our own minds. We are prone to flatter ourselves and be smugly self-righteous or self-satisfied.

Solomon said, *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts"* (Prov. 21:2).

V. 5

"Judge nothing before <u>the</u> <u>time</u>" - "The time" is defined by the next phrase - ***"Until the Lord come" -***

The time of judgment for a believer is when Christ returns
(II Tim. 4:1 - *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom";* Rev. 22:12 - *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.")*.

"The Lord...who" - It is Christ alone who will judge us (cp. Jn. 5:22).

Christ's judgment of believers will:

1) <u>Expose</u> <u>what</u> we did
"Bring to light the hidden things"

2) <u>Expose</u> <u>why</u> we did what we did
"Manifest...hearts"

Whether you realize it or not, you are under constant divine surveillance, continual divine scrutiny.

"The Lord...will bring to light the hidden things of darkness" - *What we did in secret for Christ (EX: Mt. 6:4, 6) will have the spotlight shined on it (No one else knew, but He did).

He knows the *"secrets"* of men (Rom. 2:16; Ps. 139).

"The Lord...will make manifest (open up for all to see) ***the counsels*** (motives) ***of the hearts" -***

Any motive other than love for Christ (a desire to please Him) is inferior and faulty. Such *"wood, hay, and stubble"* works will be burned up.

Why do you do what you do for Christ? Why do you come to church? Why do you pray, read Bible, witness, work in nursery, teach S.S. class, do AWANA, etc.?

Was the service rendered/motivated, by ulterior, interior (to please self) or exterior (to please others) motives?

"Then shall every man" - Every man who is part of the Rapture when Christ comes.

"Shall...have praise of God" - Praise from God (*"Well done..."*) is the only praise that should motivate us to live for Christ.

Man's praise is hollow, empty, vain.

Paul gave this advice to Timothy: *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God"* (II Tim. 2:15).

There will be no additional trials or other court of appeals, because the Lord's judgment will be 100% unbiased, accurate, and fair.

V. 3-5

Don't worry about man's evaluation! Get ready for God's!

CONCLUSION: