

1 COR 3:18-23 ALL THINGS BELONG TO YOU

The main problem at Corinth that Paul was dealing with first, was divisions in the church and specifically it was boasting, boasting in men. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians in this issue is coming to its conclusion. They needed to show the results of their conversion and manifest the change in their lives. Instead the Corinthian Christians brought the spirit of Corinth into the church rather than bringing the spirit of Christ out into Corinth.

We saw it first in 1:12, "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas." We saw him denounce it explicitly in 1:29, ". . . that no human being might boast in the presence of God." And we saw its positive alternative in 1:31, "Let him who boasts boast of the Lord." He picked up the problem again in 3:4, "When one says, 'I belong to Paul, ' and another 'I belong to Apollos,' are you not merely men?" And now he closes chapter 3 on the same issue. Verse 21: "So let no one boast of men."

They had a wrong view or perspective that needed to be changed. They had a prideful view of what wisdom was, but then Paul shows them what view they were supposed to have.

1. THE PRIDEFUL VIEW OF ONE'S OWN WISDOM-V 18-20

Paul gives them a warning in these verses.

A. YOU'RE NOT AS WISE AS YOU THOUGHT

1. Deceived

They were self-deceived.

The warning was that they better not be deceived, self deception.

The nature of the deception is the wisdom of the world. They needed to give up boasting in the wisdom of men. Don't you be deceived in what you think to be wisdom.

2. Foolish (Moros)

We get our English word from this, moron.

Human wisdom is moronic in the Lord's sight. Human wisdom is foolish in matters concerning God.

What the world considers to be wise is foolish. It is folly.

1:18, 25

To be wise you have to do things and believe things that seem to be absolutely foolishness to the world.

3. Boasting of men

The world's wisdom that supports boasting and accents man's self-sufficiency is no wisdom at all. So don't boast in men.

B. BOASTING IS EMPTY

Boasting takes you nowhere.

1. God catches the wise in their craftiness

Job 5:13, Esther 7:7-10—They hang on their own gallows.

Their plans condemn them. God catches them in their own trap.

The wisdom of man may take you to seeing the far reaches of the universe but it gets him nowhere when it relates to God.

2. God knows the thoughts of the wise are futile.

Ps 94:11

Mataios—empty, vain

3. Self-exalted boasting---the root

Pride is always at the heart of human wisdom. Wisdom feeds pride and pride drives one away from God. That will take you to a dead end.

So there are two options. You can pursue power, wealth, influence. These can drive one for a long way, but these driving influences have been replaced by the Gospel. If you rest in the Gospel, Christ crucified, you are no longer enslaved by those influences, which are the wisdom of the world. Wisdom is revealed by the Gospel which is the reversal to those driving influences.

They were bringing the wisdom of the world into the church because they didn't understand the Gospel. They were deceived. They had been seduced by the world.

When believers look to psychology for the answers to marital problems, personal problems, and moral problems, a disaster will happen. When Christian men look to popular methods for expediency alone, they are undermining their spiritual lives. Technology and science have made tremendous advances, but regarding God's plan and will human ideas are utterly worthless.

The 19th and 20th centuries produced some brilliant thinkers. The Theologians for the most part saw the Bible as just a book written by humans. They rejected or modified the scriptures to make it fit their own understanding. They said that Moses did not write the Pentateuch and that Daniel did not write Daniel. They decimated God's Word. Needless to say, they had a low view of scripture.

Philosophy cannot bring people to God, save them, and show them how to live. When people trust in human understanding, they have the wrong view of what true wisdom is.

Without scripture we are fools with empty thoughts.

So in verses 18–20, the root of boasting seems to be an inflated

view of one's own wisdom, or perhaps of one's teacher's wisdom.
And so Paul opposes it by saying that you are not as wise as you think you are and your supposed wisdom is a dead end street.

There seems to be two forces.

One force is a built-in sense of insecurity, and vulnerability, and fear in a world beyond their control and threatening to their happiness. This comes with our creaturehood and is compounded by our sin. Every one of us has it. The other force driving these boasters is the feeling that we have got things under control—that man is the master of his fate, that human wisdom will suffice to solve our problems, that we have got it all together—or we know someone who does!

And the glue that holds these forces together in one heart? Self-deception. "Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

John Piper

Human pride is rooted in two kinds of self-deception. One is the deception that I can handle my own problems. And the other is the deception that nobody can handle my problems.

Or to put it another way, there are two ways for the pride of man to dishonor Christ. One is to feel no need for him. And the other is to feel your need is so great he can't meet it. The one says, I don't need a crucified Christ to help me. The other says a crucified Christ can't help me. The one looks strong. The other looks weak. Both are demeaning to the grace of God. Piper

To the self-sufficient he says, "Your wisdom is folly. Give it up. Become a fool.

to the fearful and insecure and threatened he says, "Boasting in men is a cheap substitute for inheriting the universe. Don't you realize that God has made all things to serve your joy?"

2. THE CORRECT VIEW OF OUR POSSESSIONS VV 21-23

They needed an adjustment in their view of wisdom.

Paul is also giving reasons for not boasting after his command not to boast, but it looks as though the root of the problem is very different from the root in verses 18–20.

The reason Paul gives in verse 21b for not boasting is this: "For all things are yours." This is strange at first thought. It sounds reassuring, comforting. But the reasons for not boasting in verse 19 and 20 were threatening: "God catches the wise in their craftiness." And: "The thoughts of the wise are futile." The tone is one of warning and alarm. But the tone now after the command not to boast (in v. 21b) is reassuring; it's full of relief and hope.

A. ALL THINGS ARE OURS

Indictment and deliverance! That's the work of saving grace! Indictment: "If you think you are wise, become a fool!" Deliverance: "All things are yours!"

All the godly leaders are ours. Receive all them as gifts from God. Leaders belong to God. They were given by God to us for us. Think of not only the Biblical writers but also people like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Spurgeon etc. who have been given to us. They are ours. The Corinthians had Apollos and Paul and others. They were theirs. They didn't just have one leader. They all were theirs. Christians can learn from many good teachers. They are a means of grace. There are many different varieties and some may not be who we would identify with as far as our theology is concerned. However, if they are Christians, they belong to God and are our brothers. Even a Calvinist can learn from Wesley.

We should profit from all faithful leaders God sends us whether they are of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. If the Corinthians would have understood and

followed all three of these leaders, the church would not have had divisions. Not only are godly leaders ours, everything is.

Rom 8:17,28, John 17:22, 2 Cor 4:15, Matthew 5:5

The list expands in 22-23. All things are ours, all human existence. The world, even despite its inescapable tyrannies, where we are as slaves but are free is ours. In the Kingdom, we will rule the earth and possess it. But even now it's ours even though the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one. Our heavenly Father made it for us.

As far as life is concerned, it means eternal life. God's own life is in ours.

Death has been overcome. And to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Things present would be now including the good, bad, painful, disappointments, health, and grief and suffering. These are used by God for our good.

Things to come are heavenly blessings, of which we only have a glimpse

When we realize all these things are ours, why would we boast in men, and divide into factions? No man is the source of this inheritance, so there is no reason to boast in men. It all comes from God.

Jonathan Edwards summed it up in a sermon. 1. If you are a Christian bad things turn out for good. 2. The good can never be taken away from you.

3. The best things are yet to come. There is nothing to fear, and all things are for you. But if you are serving yourself, you'll worry about the world about life, death, and the future.

B. WE BELONG TO CHRIST

This is the greatest motive for unity. Because we all belong to Him, we belong to each other.

1 Cor 6:17, John 17:9-10, 21-23

C. CHRIST BELONGS TO GOD

We are tied together in an eternal oneness with the Father and the Son.

We must understand our spiritual unity with Christ who owns us. He gives all back to the Father and everything is complete. That is a perfect unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 15:26, Rom 11:36

There should be no cause at all for factions and disunity when we relate to the unity of the Trinity.

self, no matter how glorified by God (Romans 8:30), will never satisfy a heart that is made for God. God loves you infinitely. He sent his Son to die that he might have you, and that you might have him (1 Peter 3:18). He will not let you settle for wonderful and happy thoughts of self. Not even a glorified self. He will not let your glory, which he himself creates and delights in, replace his glory as your supreme treasure.