



Ministry Toolkit: WISDOM

Sunday 24th November 2024

1 Corinthians 1:17-21

According to the wisdom of mankind, the great minds of today, what I am about to do with the next 28 minutes of my life is foolish; stupid because it will not be aligned with today's measures of success; dull because it will not possess the sharpness of today's thinking; it will be irrational because it will not conform to the cultural norms of 2024.

Today I will hold up before you what God calls wisdom and what this world calls foolishness. Because without knowing, and being filled with, God's wisdom, your chances of success in your ministry and calling are not small...your chances are zero.

1 For that is what Paul points out in verse 17,

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

You see the wisdom of God can be summarised in two words – Jesus Christ. More specifically, the cross of Jesus Christ. And Paul's concern for his ministry is that he would deviate from, water down, or shut up about, the cross of Jesus Christ.

2 Now the wisdom of this comes back to saying it is all about the cross of Jesus Christ – it's too simplistic, it's too violent, it's too exclusive, it's too old, it's too shameful. And here's why they say that, in verse 18,

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

To those outside Christ, to those who refuse the simplicity of the cross, 'it is foolishness'.

3 Christian, are you anxious that the world will one day find an argument that destroys the cross? Or do you worry about someone challenging your faith with words like 'why do you believe a lie?' or 'you can't prove it' or 'you only believe because your parents told you to believe'.

Now when that happens the wisdom of this world says, you need a comeback that outsmarts them, or even persuades them to believe in a crucified Christ.

4

But what does verse 19 say?

For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Who says He will destroy this wisdom? Who will bring all this so called 'understanding' to nothing? God will. Now you as believers must hold onto your faith and whether their minds are changed in this life or the next is not something you can control. Really there are only two things you can do.

5

1. Bear witness to what Jesus has done in your life (speak the truth as God has revealed it to you, and in you)
2. Get out of the way – do not cause any obstacles (be consistent; love them regardless)

God will in the end bring the wisdom of this world to nothing.

So what should I do if I am not sure God's wisdom is going to hold up in the face of the wisdom of this world? Here's what Jesus said to do – build your life on it. Life like everything God ever said it 100% reliable and trustworthy.

6

Matthew 7:24-27,

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

7

Your job is not to make other people's houses crash down around their ears.

Once your life is built on every word God has spoken they have no reason to build another way.

Do you remember the kid in your class at school who was always telling someone they're wrong, pointing out the fault in the learning of others, always grassing up someone for breaking the rules. Did you ever notice how many people followed them in time?

8 That is not your calling as a Christian. This is not your confidence. Let your confidence of faith be based on what God has accomplished through Christ. Let your confidence be in what God has done in you through a crucified Christ.

9 Paul lays it out in very practical terms in 2 Corinthians 10:12,

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Paul's point is simple. Stop comparing yourselves with people who only compare people with people – it's not wise. Why?

10 Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 1:21-22 and find the answer in the closing verses,

Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

You see the wise, the influencers, the great minds, the popular ones, the famous ones, the over-achievers are the best of the best according to the wisdom of this world. And one by one they fall, and turn out to be less than they appeared.

But you won't find God through that kind of wisdom says Paul. God's pleasure is that you should know Him through the foolishness of the cross, which is not foolishness at all but the wisdom of God.

Do you remember the time young David was preparing to fight a giant?

11 This happened in 1 Samuel 17:32-33,

Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Saul was comparing David (God's wise choice) to the giant (someone who commended himself). He fell straight into the comparison trap.

12

Then a little farther on in verse 38-39,

So Saul clothed David with his armour, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armour and tried to walk, for he had not tested *them*. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested *them*." So David took them off.

13

Christian, it's time you took off all that armour you thought you needed to be a successful Jesus follower. Time to take off this world's definition of success. It's time to take off the world's version of who God made you to be. Take off the sound of this world's opinion about what God needs to get this gospel to the ends of the earth.

God has not called your opinions or your clever ideas, He called you, as He found you.

Do you know what would have happened if David had showed up looking like the world? He would have died. Some of you are dying under the weight of looking like you think this world needs you to look or sounding like this world thinks you need to sound like. Jesus says follow me, come live, take it off and follow Me!

14

Dear Lord, show me the armour I have put on. Show me all the ways I'm trying to compare myself to the wisdom of this world. And dear Lord once you have shown me, help me take it off.