

God's Wisdom: True Christian Living

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] Thank you for this evening and for the opportunity to look at your word. I pray that you would help us to understand what is here. I pray that you would help us to apply what is here.

And Lord, I pray that you would give each of us an opportunity, an open door, and the courage and the boldness to share the gospel with others.

For we each have someone in our minds, someone that we long to share the gospel with, and we pray that you would open their hearts and their minds to the truth, but you would give us that boldness to share.

And I pray that tonight as we look at your word, you would use it to equip us to be ready to share. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Okay, I'm going to give you a bit of a review of where we've been in Corinthians.

We want to go back and think about the problem that the Corinthian church has. The problem is marrying the gospel or the truth of God with other worldview systems.

[1 : 07] It's called syncretism, when you marry two things together like that. And it messes up a lot of things. One of the things that it messes up is the nature of truth.

The nature of truth. When we think about the nature of truth, what we're talking about is, what is the definition of truth, and how do we come to know something is true?

And one of the things is that every different worldview that's out there has a way in which they perceive truth, or a way in which they say that they learn the truth.

You can think about somebody who's a materialist, and for them, it's only true if I can measure it somehow, if it's observable, if it's touchable, tangible.

As Christians, we have a completely different sort of way that we come to know truth. For the Corinthians then, trying to marry the Christian worldview with this other thing, for them, their way of knowing truth was going to be something akin to the modern sort of existentialism.

[2 : 18] And you don't have to know what that means, but it works like this, where if I listen to someone speaking, and they do such a good job of that speaking, that my heart gets stirred.

And by that, I mean in a very, just base way, in a very sort of emotional way, and with no examination of the content of what's being said, then I know it's true because I feel something. Yeah, a little bit, yeah, kind of a little Mormon burning in the bosom. So, because they're marrying these things together, they're not really understanding truth, and then that gets into the second problem, and that is the nature of salvation in the Christian life.

For them, salvation means pedigree. Okay? Who is my father in the faith? That makes me the more spiritual person.

So, that's why they have these divisions, right? I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow Cephas. And the reason is, is because when Paul preached, I had a burning in the bosom.

[3 : 25] And therefore, I know I'm more spiritual than you guys, because I listened to your guy, and I didn't get anything out of it. And so, this whole problem that they have, it affects everything.

And it does. It gets into their behavior and their sinful behavior. It gets into the way that they do worship. The whole thing about spiritual gifts, the only reason that Paul wrote anything about spiritual gifts at all is because you had a whole group of people who were saying that because they spoke in tongues, they were more spiritual than everybody else.

And so, he was coming along going like, well, let's level the playing field here, you know. And even the resurrection, the doctrine of the resurrection, was beginning to be muddled and messed up. They were believing, we'll come back to this again and again, the further we get into this, they were believing that they had arrived at the very end time.

And what I mean by that is that the resurrection already happened, therefore, you have arrived in your perfected state. So, these spiritual people were doing things that were sinful because they thought they could, because they've arrived at a perfected state.

[4 : 40] They were wrong about so many things. And even to the degree that many of the women began to just divorce their husbands because since they are Christians and now they're super spiritual people and have arrived to this eschaton, they don't need those men anymore.

And so, this is the problem going on with this church. This is a really messed up church. That's why I said this last week. Most pastors, when they preach on Corinthians, they preach the series titled Letters to a Messed Up Church because it's a very messed up church.

Now, the first problem he's dealing with is the foundational problem and that is the division that's between them because the division is actually between the truth of God and the Corinthians.

Paul represents the truth of God and the Corinthians represent lots of different truths. And what he's been doing from chapter 1, verse 18, all the way through what we're looking at today and chapter 4 is basically four, eight big arguments that kind of take and gut this idea of their syncretism.

It just guts it. It just takes it out and trashes it. And I've given you sort of a review of the points we've made so far. I'm not going to read those and go over those.

[6 : 00] You can take a look at those later if you want to. What I want to do is I want us to get into this seventh, second to the last thing because here's what he's going to do in these verses.

In 18 through 23, he is going to help us learn then how is the Christian life lived. So if truth comes through this burning of the bosom, if the Christian life is about who my spiritual father is, then the way you live out the Christian life is going to look different than if you believe what the Bible says. And so Paul gives two commands. He explains both in order to help them understand how they need to live the Christian life. So let's read the passage and we'll look at each command separately. It begins in verse 18. It says, Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness. And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile.

[7 : 16] So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future.

All are yours. And you are Christ's. And Christ is God's. So the first commandment comes there in verse 18. And verse 18, 19, and 20 kind of go together as a unit.

The command, the first half of the command is let no one deceive himself. So he doesn't want you, he didn't want the Corinthians to be taking in and thinking and hearing all of these various truth claims out there and then thinking about them so much that they begin to deceive themselves. He wants them to think properly. He wants them to build their lives on some truth. He doesn't want them to take these things in and let it deceive themselves.

The second half of the command then is this. If anyone thinks he's wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. I just love the way Paul is always repeating himself in these things, right?

[8 : 30] But his point, his point is kind of hailing back to chapter one where he talks about that the preaching of the gospel was foolishness to the Gentiles.

And so you have this idea that God has both wisdom and God has folly. And it depends upon who you are as to how you understand that.

If you're a Christian, you trust God, you understand that it's wisdom. But if you're not a Christian, then you think of it as foolishness. But then, when you get to the world, they have their wisdom and their foolishness.

And in their eyes, their wisdom is wisdom. But in God's eyes, their wisdom is folly, right? So he's saying, if you think you're wise in this age, you really think that that's where you are.

What you really need to do is you need to become a fool to become wise. If you're wise in the world's estimations, you need to become a fool in the world's estimation to become wise in God's estimation.

[9 : 31] That's really what he's telling them. He's wanting them to look at things the way he looks at things. He wants them to adopt his mindset, his way of understanding the world, rather than what they're hearing around them.

Well, then, in verse 19, what he does is he gives a reason for this. Okay? And his reason's pretty simple, right? It says this, for the wisdom of this world is folly with God. Okay, we've already said that.

We kind of know that. That's already something he's written, but he's just saying this is the reason because what men do is complete and utter nonsense before God.

What they think about life and the way that they come up with truth is foolish. So let me see if I can give an example of this.

Think about the idea of murder. Okay? The idea of murder. Now, if you ask the general population out there, is murder wrong?

[10:37] I think we'd get about a 98% response that says yes. Pretty sure. There'd be a few, maybe, weirdos that might not say that. If you then ask the follow-up question that says, why is it wrong?

Now we might begin to start to get lots of different answers. And there are some answers out there that people have. You know, one of the answers that I've heard people give is this, that that is not good for the flourishing of human society.

Well, that seems pretty reasonable and true, right? But is that the best answer? No. What is the best answer? Because we're image bearers of God.

He's told us in Genesis chapter 8 or 9 that murder, that murder is wrong because what we're doing is we're killing an image bearer of God.

So what you have there is you have two ways of thinking about and coming up with truth and reasons and understanding. One way is God's way and one way is not his way.

[11:51] And what he's calling on these Corinthians to do is think my way, have my mindset in you because the wisdom of this world, no matter how good it looks, is folly to God.

So don't let yourself become deceived. Now, prove his point. Paul quotes from two passages of Scripture. You can see that in verse 19.

The first one he says, for it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness. That comes from the book of Job, chapter 5, verse 13. And the idea of he catches the wise in their craftiness.

Have you ever seen these, or did you ever make one when you were a kid, a trap for a bird? Right? You had these sticks that would come up into kind of like a pyramid type shape.

You have a piece of string at the bottom with some bread. They'd fly through and grab the bread. The sticks would fall on them and they couldn't get out from underneath the sticks. That's great.

[12:52] It's the only way you can eat sometimes. Anyway. But that's a pretty common sort of thing. If you need to eat, you make a trap to catch the thing.

Well, the word that's used here in Job's writing is that you're the person, you're the hunter, and you're setting up this trap and you're caught in your own trap. You're caught in your own trap. And what that means then is that he's saying that the wise think they're wise, but really, the things that they think describe reality, the things that they think are the essence of reality, are going to be self-refuting.

They're going to get caught in their own wisdom. It's going to trip them up like an extension cord, right? And one of the ways to think about this is to pick on somebody. And so I'll pick on the evolutionary atheist for just a second.

And there's several famous modern atheists, and one of them has this thing that he describes us as humans as being biological machines.

[14:01] And as a biological machine, you don't really love your wife. That's just a biological process. Right? And you're not really thinking. That's just a biological process, much like digestion.

Well, the only problem is that when they begin to look at something like murder and try to call it wrong, now they don't want to use their own worldview to call it wrong.

Why is it wrong? Isn't it just a biological process? So that's this idea of this self-refuting. That's what he's meaning about they get caught in it. His second passage of Scripture that he quotes from, he says in verse 20, and again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile.

That comes from Psalm 94, verse 11. That word futile means breath or vanity, vaporness. Right? So, Paul is saying, I know that God thinks their wisdom is folly because number one, they get caught in it, and that's what God says in his word.

[15:10] Number two, their wisdom won't last because they're nothing but vapor because that's what God's word says. So in other words, what Paul's doing is he says, don't deceive yourself.

Think the way that God thinks, and let me show you how that works. Turn to his word, open up his word, prove it from the word. So what you end up with then as kind of a way to think about how is Paul telling them they ought to live the Christian life?

He's telling them they need to live on the truth of God. They need to live on the truth of God. And this is, this is a vital and important thing for us to do because we should examine everything by the word of God.

To live on the truth of God is to make sure that we're not living by other truths as well. And part of the discipleship process is having exposed in me places that I'm still thinking like the world and replace that with thoughts from God's word.

And sometimes I don't see it because I'm blind and I need other people to help point that out, but they're going to have to point it out with the word of God because that's the only thing that can convict and help me to see.

[16:34] So, if we're going to live on the truth of God, then I'm just going to say a couple of things that we can do. One is read the Bible.

I don't know how many times I can say that again and again and again, but here's the thing. What I mean by read the Bible is not just simply read the Bible, but I mean really study it. Really get the word of God into your life.

Be saturated your whole life. With the word of God because that's where the truth is. So, both in the preaching, studying of the word, as well as the reading of the word.

And I'll tell you, I think you can accomplish a lot by just reading the word. You know, I have done the thing in the past where I read through the whole Bible in a year and I've done that several times.

But I think probably the best way to approach it is to take and read a chapter a day. And when you read a chapter, you have yourself a notebook and in that notebook you write down, you know, 1 Samuel chapter 5 and then after you read it you just write a single sentence or two about what that chapter is about and then you read the next day and you read the next day and the next day and you do that several times through where you've come to chapter 5 of 1 Samuel three or four times in, you know, ten years.

[17:54] you begin to really grasp the scope of the Bible, the big picture of the Bible and I think that that's a healthy thing to do. But here's the thing, just reading the Bible by itself, studying the Bible, hearing the preaching, hearing these studies that we're doing, that's not enough.

You've got to apply it which means you've got to examine everything in life through the theological lens of the Scripture. Let me give you a couple examples.

What would be the biblical understanding of homecoming in a local public school? For that matter, what would be the biblical understanding of a public school?

For that matter, what would be the biblical understanding for educating children? For that matter, what would be the biblical understanding of children? You see what I'm saying?

And there's all kinds of pieces in there where you need to know what does God's Word say about this? You know, we started with homecoming but then we've trailed back to all kinds of things.

[19:01] When our kids were young, we would watch movies and we would stop them sometimes in the middle. This was more me than Michelle because she's the nice one. And I would say, okay, they just said this in the movie.

How many of you know what the Bible says about that? And I would try to get my kids to think theological. Of course, they did not want to think theologically. Just let the movie play, please. And maybe my approach was ill-timed and all those kinds of things.

But the point is, do we know what the biblical view is? Elections. What a nation is.

What a government is. What we should be expecting from our government. You know, we live in a great country. A country unlike any other country that's ever been in the history of the world.

A country unlike any other in the history of the world. Most Christians have never lived under such a government as ours. Yet, Christians have lived.

[20:04] You see what I'm saying? So there's a biblical thing that says that this is great, we love it, but like, is this necessary for us to be able to live the Christian life? So I just want to encourage us, living upon God's truth as a Christian means I'm interpreting all of life through the lens of Scripture.

Okay? Alright, so let me pause there. Any questions about that first point before I dive into the second commandment? I would say, yeah, I mean, like that's a great example because it is so worldly here that being a Christian someplace else for some people is going to be an easier road.

And it meant that much the relationship to the Lord meant that much where she would whether she was in the death than her faith or her freedom will and to sacrifice.

That's right. Yeah. Anybody else? Okay. Well, let's look at the second commandment then. Second commandment is in verse 21 and the commandment says let no one boast in men.

Okay? So that's this thing. And that sounds pretty ripe for right here, right? If you think about what we've read so far in Corinthians, you know, he starts out with that whole thing, you know, that there's divisions among you.

[21 : 21] Some of you say I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Christ. And so to say do not boast in men seems like a very seems like a very right thing to say.

And so I think what he's talking about is going to become clear as we go on. But let's look at his reason. And he states his reason and it's a pretty lengthy reason. It goes from verse 21 all the way through verse 23.

And what he does is he states the first part of the reason in a summary fashion. He has a bunch of things that he uses to define that. Then he summarizes it again. And then he gives two more statements that sort of help clarify what he means.

Does that make sense, the structure? So here's what he says. He says, let no one boast in men for all things are yours.

And now here's this middle part where he's explaining a bunch. Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future.

[22 : 28] and now he's going to summarize again all are yours. And now he's going to further explain. And you are Christ's and Christ is God's.

Okay. So now you know exactly why you shouldn't boast in men. You got it, right? Paul, what are you talking about? So let's start where Christ is God's.

Now what this means, you'll notice if you've got the ESV, it has God with an apostrophe S meaning possessive. So Christ is God's means that God owns Christ or that Christ belongs to God.

Now there's a lot we could say about this but let's get down to some basics here. First, what he's not talking about is he's not talking about the divinity of both persons.

he's talking about their roles as they work together in salvation. And it's a little bit like thinking about John 3.16. Okay. In John 3.16, God so loved the world that he what?

[23 : 39] He gave his only son. So in John 3.16, you have both the father and the son engaged together, partnered together for our salvation.

they're working together in order to save. That's what we have there, right? He's an expression of the father's love even though the father gave him he also sent the son and the son willingly came, right?

The father was not unwilling, the son was not unwilling. We just have this partnership where the father has the authority to send his son into this world and he becomes the new Adam, right?

So we'll just hold that for a second and that's all he's saying is that Christ belongs to God. They're partnered together because there's this relationship. Then he says, if we keep going backwards, you are Christ's.

You are Christ's, meaning you belong to Christ. Now how come you belong to Christ? He paid the price, right?

[24 : 45] His death on the cross purchased two things, right? It purchased the promises and it purchased us. You know, we could get a little bit more theological to say some other things, but the focus is is that he purchased us by his blood.

We belong to him. We doubly belong to him, right? He created us and he saved us. So something about the fact that God sent his son and we belong to the son that makes it so that everything now belongs to us.

And the reason for that is because by, by virtue of his life, death, and resurrection, Christ is the new Adam. And he is the rightful ruler of the world.

Adam, if he had not sinned, right? The idea is that he had, he had a command he had to fulfill and if he had fulfilled that command, then things would have been different, but he didn't.

And so he failed. And so now, with the new Adam, he's got a command that he's got to do and he's successful. He does exactly what his father wants for him to do.

[25 : 54] And because of that, we belong to him and so does everything else. And so because we are partnered with him and united with him the way he is with his father, then therefore, everything

that he owns, we own.

everything that belongs to him belongs to us. And so he lists out five things and three people.

Okay? He lists out the world, right?

So the world was his before because he made it, but the world becomes his again because he's going to redeem it. Right? It's under a curse. He's going to set it free from that curse. Life and death are his because he's conquered.

He's lived the life. He's conquered death. Present and future are his because in the current reality we have sin and death and the devil, but those are defeated and in the future he's coming back.

So both the present and the future are all his. And then Paul, Cephas, and Apollos. This is where the script gets flipped on the Corinthians because in their mind I'm spiritual because I belong to Paul and Paul is saying no, no, I belong to you because you belong to Christ.

[27 : 12] I'm just a tool. I'm just an instrument. I'm nothing more. All are yours because all belong to you and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

And one commentator as he's looking at these five realities and I want us to dive into those, he writes this. I found this really fascinating. These five items, the world, life, death, the present, the future, are the ultimate tyrannies of human existence.

These are the ultimate tyrannies of human existence to which people are in lifelong bondage as slaves. But for Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus marked the turning of the ages in such a way that nothing lies outside of Christ's jurisdiction.

His fulfilling what His Father sent Him to do, His resurrection made Him the rightful ruler over all the cosmos and so now all of these things are under His jurisdiction.

The world is under His jurisdiction. Life is in His jurisdiction. Death is in His jurisdiction. The present, the future, are all under His jurisdiction and for those who are in Christ Jesus, what things were formerly tyrannies are now our new birthrights.

[28 : 39] What were formerly tyrannies are now our new birthright. We are who we are because we belong to Christ, not to men, not to some spiritual father.

See, there's a problem that comes up in the early church after the apostles that matches this problem here so they didn't quite get away from it.

The problem came with persecution. If you endured persecution and you didn't recant your faith but you happened to notice that Brother John over here who was your pastor and who baptized you, he did recant his faith.

The question was asked, well, am I really saved since he's the one who baptized me? It's a very similar situation to what you have in Corinth.

They're thinking who's the more spiritual because of who we belong to and it's like, no, no, no, no, that's not the point at all. You belong to Christ and therefore you're saved and all these other things including the men who are servants, they belong to you.

[29 : 52] The servants of Christ, the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers from Ephesians chapter 4, they belong to the church as gift to God.

They are not, they are not then turning that around and the owners of the church or the ones who own these people because they happen to be their offspring or whatever.

No, they're just instruments, they're just tools. So, putting all of this argument together, here's basically what he's saying to the Corinthians about how they need to live the Christian life.

That is, you need to live as somebody who belongs to Christ. You need to live as someone who belongs to Christ. That's the two ways in this passage. Live on the truth of God, live as though you belong to Christ.

And I just want to say, I want to talk about these five things just because I think, I think we say, well, what does it mean to belong to Christ? I think when we think about the world, that means, here we are, this world is our world.

[31 : 00] It doesn't belong, it doesn't belong to the lost and to the heathen. This world belongs to Christ. He says in the Sermon on the Mount that the meek shall inherit the earth.

You know, the prayer in, the Lord's prayer is let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We should be concerned with what happens here on this world and it should make us want to be involved and engaged with things to make this world as best a place as possible until the end because this world, while it is going to be, it's going to be remade, we still recognize that we are not, we're not the, we're not the guests, we're not the visitors.

This world belongs to us. Now, there's also the image of us being strangers. That is in no way contradicting those things. We should be interested in the expansion of the gospel for the good of mankind which will get us into all kinds of things such as voting and engineering and art and commerce.

Life and death belong to us. Life and death belong to us because we belong to Christ. And so, the life that I live is a life that I should live, not with, not filling my life with trinkets and boats and things like that but living my life for Christ.

Right? This is the life that is worth living is the life that's lived for Christ. Death is ours. What does Paul say about death? That it's gain. See, death used to be a tyranny.

[32 : 45] We memorized a verse at Christmas, I guess it was last year as a part of our Christmas thing and it's from Hebrews chapter 2 verses 12 and 13.

Is that right? Can you say it? All of a sudden I drew a blank. Oh, so again, that's the new one. Since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partake of the same things so that through death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that's the devil, and he might deliver all of those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

When you are afraid of death, that is nothing, that is nothing more than just being a slave to that fear, right? Well, as Christians, one of the biblical ways we should be looking is that we shouldn't be afraid of death.

Death is gain. This life is nothing. We need to go on to be with the Lord, right? And so, so death is ours as well.

The present is ours. The future is ours. You know, there's nothing greater than for a Christian to try to live for today, and there's no way to live for today unless you can solve two problems.

[34 : 07] Out here is the problem of, in the past, shame and regret. And out here in the future is the problem of fear and anxiety. And in the cross, we can live today because we've been forgiven for the past and he holds the future.

And so, as a Christian, living as someone who belongs to Christ is living with that sort of rooted and grounded faith, not worried about the future, not regretting the past, but living on his truth, belonging to him, not deceiving ourselves, not boasting in men.

That's what the Christian life is supposed to be. So, I just encourage you to be thinking not only as you read Scripture, but then as you read Scripture, interpreting the world around you from the lens of Scripture, and then live as someone who's taking this world back, who's living every day to the fullest, who's not afraid of death, and who's then trying to make the gospel go around the world.