

WHY WERE THE APOSTLES NON-POLITICAL? (Part-seven of a ten-part study)

Paul makes it clear to the believers in Corinth that they lacked the eternal perspective necessary for their spiritual growth and development. He takes his discourse on the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 2 and turns it into a practical admonishment in chapter three. In doing so, he reveals what many of us already know: the believers in Corinth were the most spiritually dysfunctional church during the apostolic era. He makes that point at the very outset of the chapter in vv1-3 –

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”

Throughout both of his letters to these believers, he reproves them about the error of conflating the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. Trying to have it both ways would not work in the sanctification process which God was seeking to accomplish in their lives. Notice Paul’s paradoxical statement in 1 Corinthians 3:18 – **“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.”**

This harkens back to 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2:14, where God’s truth as a whole, and the gospel in particular, are regarded as foolishness by the unsaved people of this world. Why? Because those who hold to such an attitude are perishing in their spiritual deadness, and are trapped in the downward spiral of this present world system, headed in the opposite direction of the Christian. But the Corinthians were stuck in the middle. They continued to cling to the wisdom of the world out of a desire to not be regarded as foolish by the world, even though they were responding positively to God’s wisdom in the proclamation of the gospel, by making genuine decisions of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This fence straddling was interfering with their Christ-like development to the point of keeping them in a condition of spiritual infancy.

They had deceived themselves into thinking they could have it both ways, but they could not. Their love for the world and its wisdom, was incompatible with a love for God and His wisdom, in promoting their progressive sanctification. They were in need of abandoning the wisdom of this world, while still functioning in this world, so as to fully embrace the wisdom of God. Then, meaningful spiritual growth could begin taking place in their lives; even if it meant being regarded as foolish by the people of this world. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, Paul speaks of the work in which he and others were engaged, which also factors into his concern for the believers in Corinth. Not only was their growth being hindered by their love for the world and its wisdom; but as long as that continued, they could not become effective participants in the building of Christ’s Church.

Paul knew of this need in other churches as well, expressing the same thought, but more generically, in both Philippians 3:18-20 and Colossians 3:1-4. He reminds those believers that their primary citizenship is in heaven and not on earth; encouraging them to have as their laser focus, the priorities pertaining to the eternal kingdom of heaven, instead of the many transient kingdoms currently here on earth. Without such a focus, they too would be prevented from successfully engaging in the building of Christ’s Church. All of the above must now be applied to our current generation of American Evangelicals, who have become far too enamored with the political wisdom of this world, and far too fearful of being considered as foolish by the people of this world. This in turn has caused them to forget where their primary citizenship resides, blurring their focus as to what their true priorities should be: **EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP!** We will do our best to make that much-needed and long-overdue application, next.