

SELF-DECEPTION : WORLDLY WISDOM

Joe Slater

The ancient Greeks looked with profound pride upon their philosophers. Philosophy literally means “love of wisdom”. Who could argue against that? Few, however, searched for wisdom in the right place.

In his first letter to Corinth (a Greek city), Paul spent the opening chapters contrasting worldly and divine wisdom. He concluded, *“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool, that he may become wise”* (1 Corinthians 3:18).

Where ought one to look for wisdom? The philosophers erred by looking within themselves. When the gospel was preached, most of them rejected it as foolishness. *“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”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Even today, pop psychology says, “Look in your heart to find the right way!” But God says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”* (Jeremiah 17:9). People can look inward, thinking and meditating, from now until they die, but they will never find God’s wisdom there!

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:19-21). We see, then, that what the world calls foolishness, God calls wisdom. Don’t deceive yourself! You cannot find God by looking inward. God has revealed Himself and His wisdom in the Person of Jesus Christ!

The Altar Builder

You can trace the life of Abraham through the book of Genesis. From the early days in Ur of the Chaldeans to his final resting place at the Cave in Machpelah near Hebron, the life of Abraham can be traced by a trail of altars. Everyplace he went a remnant of his visit would be left behind: an altar.

Worship was central in the life of Abraham. He openly praised God without reservation or shame. Throughout his 175 years he came to trust the God who had called him to inherit the "promised land." He went where God led him. He was willing to offer what God demanded, even if it was his only son. God was his strength. Abraham was God's servant.

To those who would follow, Abraham's relationship with God would be greatly admired. "The God of Abraham" would become a familiar address to the one true God of heaven and earth. Today Muslim, Jew and Christian all hold Abraham in high regard. Like Abraham, we must value worship. We must leave behind us a trail that indicates our strength was found in God.

Abraham is remembered for his righteousness. He is considered an example of faith. He was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23). This could never have happened but for a life of worship and devotion. It could never happen without the altars he built.

--David Bragg (via *Bulletin Gold*)

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Character is determined by what you stand for.

Reputation is ruined by what you fall for.

WHEN WE DIFFER

“When brothers and sisters differ with one another, how we differ is just as important as the fact that we differ, or as the subject about which we differ” (Joshua Fullman, Chapel speech at Faulkner University).

A dog owner was trying to force-feed his dog some cod liver oil. The dog was resisting violently. As the “fight” continued, some of the oil was spilled onto the floor. The dog eagerly lapped up the cod liver oil from the floor. It wasn’t the medicine the dog was rejecting, it was the method of delivery!

Some of us seem to think that a person who is honestly mistaken about some doctrine needs to be rebuked and condemned rather than being taught. When we do this, we often do more harm than good. We solidify people in their error.

When we are correcting a brother overtaken in a fault, we are to do so with gentleness and humility (Galatians 6:1). When we answer those who ask for a reason for our hope, we are to answer them with gentleness and respect (2 Peter 3:16). Whenever we speak, we are to speak truth with love (Ephesians 4:15).

--via Preacher Talk (ed. by Cecil May, Jr.)

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Some “friends” are like your shadow; they are always near when the sun is shining upon you, but when the clouds come and the darkness gathers about you, they have vanished.

--R.L. Whiteside (“Anvil Sparks”)