

1 Corinthians 3:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Analysis

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness (ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν, ho drassomenos tous sophous en tē panourgia autōn)—Paul quotes Job 5:13, where Eliphaz describes God's judgment on scheming wisdom. Panourgia (πανουργία) means craftiness, cunning, unscrupulous cleverness. God catches (δρασσόμενος, seizes) the clever in their own schemes—their plots become their downfall.

History confirms this repeatedly: the sophisticated philosophies of Greece (Stoicism, Epicureanism) have vanished; the intellectually fashionable ideologies of each age eventually collapse; the 'wise' who reject Christ find their wisdom bankrupt at death's door. Meanwhile, the 'foolish' gospel—bloodied Savior, penal substitution, bodily resurrection—endures and transforms lives across millennia. Paul's quotation from Job underscores that worldly wisdom's futility isn't New Testament innovation but creation-order reality: fallen human wisdom, divorced from God, leads to destruction. The 'craftiness' may be brilliant by human standards, but God easily overthrows it (Psalm 2:4, 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh').

Historical Context

Job, written perhaps 2000 years before Paul, already diagnosed worldly wisdom's futility. Eliphaz's observation that God catches the wise in their craftiness was

vindicated repeatedly in Israel's history—Pharaoh's schemes, Haman's plots, Herod's infanticide. Paul applies this ancient truth to Corinth's contemporary intellectual pretensions.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What examples from history, current events, or your own experience demonstrate that worldly wisdom is 'foolishness with God'?
2. How has God 'caught the wise in their own craftiness' in your life—exposing the bankruptcy of strategies that seemed prudent at the time?
3. What confidence does this truth provide when the world mocks Christian beliefs as foolish or outdated?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	γάρ	σοφία	τοῦ	κόσμου	τούτου	μωρία	παρὰ	τῷ
G3588	For	the wisdom	G3588	world	of this	foolishness	with	G3588
	G1063	G4678		G2889	G5127	G3472	G3844	

θεῷ	ἐστιν	γέγραπται	γάρ	ὁ	δρασσόμενος	τοὺς	σοφοὺς
God	is	it is written	For	G3588	He taketh	G3588	the wise
G2316	G2076	G1125	G1063		G1405		G4680

ἐν	τῇ	πανουργίᾳ	αὐτῶν·
in	G3588	craftiness	their own
G1722		G3834	G846

Additional Cross-References

Job 5:13 (Parallel theme): He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

Psalms 141:10 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Isaiah 44:25 (Parallel theme): That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

1 Corinthians 2:6 (Parallel theme): Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Exodus 18:11 (References God): Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

2 Samuel 16:23 (References God): And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

2 Samuel 15:31 (Parallel theme): And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

2 Samuel 17:23 (Parallel theme): And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

2 Samuel 17:14 (Parallel theme): And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.