

# (1 Corinthians) Introduction to 1st Corinthians

by Brian Brodersen

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*The sermon introduces the epistle to the Corinthians, highlighting its practical and corrective nature, and emphasizing the significance of the city of Corinth and the church planted by Paul.*

**Duration:** 59:29

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 1:2-10, Philipians 1:6, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "True Wisdom"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker criticizes preachers who prioritize their own ego over effectively communicating the word of God. He shares an example of a preacher who uses complex words to appear intelligent, but fails to connect with his audience. The speaker then addresses the issue of division within the church, emphasizing the importance of unity and speaking the same message. He warns against compromising with the world and encourages believers to hold fast to God's truth, even if it goes against societal norms. The sermon concludes with the reminder that true wisdom and salvation come through the message of the crucified Christ, rather than worldly knowledge or achievements.

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## Transcript

This first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians is quite a bit different than the epistle to the Romans that we've been studying. The epistle to the Romans is primarily what you would call a doctrinal epistle. And the great doctrines of the Christian faith were laid out by Paul in that epistle to the Romans.

Corinthians, on the other hand, is not so much a doctrinal epistle, but it's much more a practical epistle. And it is, in its nature, corrective. Paul is writing to them to correct many of the problems that existed in that church.

Now, this epistle, I believe, is extremely relevant for the church today. I think that we will find as we go through it that there are many parallels between the things that were going on in this church and things that are going on in the modern church today. And I think that you'll find it quite fascinating as we go through this epistle to see just how relevant it is.

So often, people who do not know the Bible will make the accusation that the Bible is old-fashioned and irrelevant to modern life. Anytime someone makes that kind of a statement, I'm certain that that person has never read the Bible because the Bible is anything but old-fashioned and irrelevant. It is entirely relevant to every age.

And again, this epistle, I think, is particularly relevant to the present condition of the church. So let's begin now in verse one. Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God, which is at Corinth.

Now, the city of Corinth was a city that, I think, to simplify it, it was a city that would be like so many of our cities today. Not much has changed at all. It was a place of great economic activity.

It was a center of trade for the Roman world. There was a lot of money flowing through Corinth that therefore brought people from all over the world to that city. And there were people that were extremely wealthy.

There was, of course, the working class, and then there were also people that were extremely poor in the city. The city was given over in many ways to various forms of immorality. The city hosted the temple of Aphrodite.

And there were, according to many historians, at least one thousand prostitutes who were employed by the temple and who regularly could be found in the city, making themselves available to those who would be in the city on business. So an extremely immoral city was Corinth so immoral that the ancient Greeks use the term a Corinthian to speak of an immoral person. So if they wanted to make reference to someone who was immoral, especially in the sexual sense, they would simply refer to them as a Corinthian.

The Corinthians were devout sports fans. The the Isthmian games were held there on a biannual basis, and so people would flock there for the sporting events. And it was also a place of learning and a place where many philosophers based themselves.

It was a place that was just extremely given over to the things of the world. This is the city that this particular church was planted in a city with a population of about five hundred thousand, quite a large city at that time. And so in many ways, I think this particular city, as I said, would be comparable to any of the great cities of Europe and in many ways very similar to this city that we are in.

Now, the church was planted by the efforts of the Apostle Paul himself. On his second missionary journey, Paul went into Europe and he had come down through Greece. He had made his way through Athens and on his way from Athens, he stopped in Corinth.

And he went into the synagogue, as was his custom, and he began to preach the gospel in the synagogue. Paul, of course, was a Jew and he was a rabbi. So he would find a welcoming in most of the synagogues and he would go in and he would take the opportunity there to tell, first of all, his own brother and the Jewish people about the fulfillment of Scripture through Jesus of Nazareth, who Paul proclaimed to be the Messiah.

And so Paul spent several weeks ministering in the synagogue, but there came a point where the Jews became hostile to his message and they drove him out. There was a man who lived next door to the synagogue named Justice, and this man opened his home and Paul continued to preach, now directing his message more to the Gentiles than to the Jews. And so there was a tremendous work of God's spirit that began to develop in this city of Corinth, and Paul spent a minimum of a year and a half in the city.

Now, it's interesting that the Lord actually appeared to Paul and encouraged him about his ministry in this city. Now, Paul had experienced a lot of persecution and he had been driven out of some of the cities in Greece, and apparently he was a bit timid about his ministry in Corinth and the Lord appeared to him and

spoke to him and said to him, do not keep silent. But speak, for I have many people in this city and no one will attack you or harm you.

The thing that I find so interesting about that was when you consider the condition of the city, a very sinful city, yet at the same time, God says, I have many people in this city. That was an encouragement to the apostle. And that, of course, is consistent with what the Bible tells us in the area of a principle of how God works and where he works.

The Bible tells us that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. So Corinthian Corinth was a city where sin abounded, but it was also a place where the grace of God abounded and this beautiful work of God's spirit was established in this city. And this great church grew out of that work.

Now, we also live in a city where sin abounds. I don't have to take any time to describe that in any detail, do I? You just walk out your door and it's not too far before you're confronted with the reality of sin in this city. And sometimes as Christians, I think we can become overwhelmed and think, you know, this place is so sinful.

It's so wicked, it's so given over. We can easily conclude that there probably isn't any hope of anything significant ever happening. But yet I'm encouraged by the fact that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more.

And just as God spoke to Paul and said, I have many people in this city, I believe that God would speak to us today as well and say, I have many people in this city. There are many people that God wants to reach who are living these godless lifestyles presently. But yet all of us were at one time living those godless lifestyles as well.

And look at what God has done in our lives and what he's done in our lives. He can certainly do in the lives of others. And of course, he desires to do that in the lives of others.

So to the Church of God, which is at Corinth to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours. Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul reminds them that they are called saints.

They are ones whom God has set apart. They've been sanctified in Christ Jesus and they have not been set apart alone. Now, one of the problems that the Corinthians developed was that they developed sort of an elite, an elitist mentality.

And they they really did get to think at some point that they were probably the only true Christians. And they even challenged, to some degree, the apostleship of Paul and even challenged his authority. And it seems by some of the things he said that they even challenged his faith.

And so he speaks to them from the very onset and reminds them that, yes, indeed, you are saints, but you're saints, along with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now, he says in verse four, I think my God always concerning you for the grace of God, which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. So this was a church that had been greatly gifted by God.

They were enriched by the Lord in all utterance and in all knowledge. And Paul says concerning them that they did not come short in any gift. So God had really poured his spirit out in this place.

There was a tremendous work of the spirit that took place among these people and in this fellowship. But yet, as we're going to see as we go on, this did not exclude them from having problems. And they, of course.

Misunderstood the grace of God to some degree, they began to abuse the grace of God. They began to think that, well, God's blessing is upon us. We can live any way we want.

And that doesn't matter because we have the gifts of the spirit and so forth. And Paul is going to go on and deal with that. And he's going to correct their wrong thinking.

But it's interesting that from the things Paul says here in the introduction, there was apparently a real dynamic work of the spirit that took place in this community. And again, as we look at the conditions of Corinth, you would see how there would have to be something quite dynamic and significant to bring about the changes that were needed. But he's commending them here, basically.

And the apostle Paul was a wise spiritual father. Instead of coming in and immediately dealing with the problems, he would. Endear himself to them, so to speak, by encouraging them, pointing out the good things about them and the fellowship, and then he would go on to deal with the difficulties.

As we've been studying the letters to the churches that Jesus wrote, recorded there in Revelation chapters two and three, we find the same thing. The Lord begins with the word of commendation. He commends them for the good things, but then he goes on to deal with the problems.

And so there are good things in our lives that God will commend us for. But that doesn't mean that he might not move on to correct us in other areas. So the apostle Paul begins by commending them, and then he's going to move on to more of a of a correction.

But he says concerning Jesus Christ, who also will confirm you to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul is confident that in spite of the problems within this church, God is going to work and he's going to complete the good work that he started. And then God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now, again, Paul is preparing them, really. He's preparing them for this, this discipline that he's about to go into with them. But he's reminding them that God is able whenever a church exercises discipline in any way.

It should always be with the goal of restoration. It should always be with the motivation of seeing the person disciplined come back to a right relationship with the Lord. That's what church discipline is actually designed for.

It's designed to bring people back to a right relationship with God. It's never designed to drive someone away from the Lord. The motivation is always to see them restored.

And whenever we exercise authority in the realm of church discipline, those who are in a position of leadership need to make sure that that's where their heart is. You see, it's a matter in many ways of motive and the motive always ought to be restoration. We're looking to discipline this person in order that they

might be restored and come back into a right relationship with God.

That's Paul's motivation. He's going to say some difficult things to them, things that are going to be hard for them to endure. But yet he's reminding them from the very onset that his motivation is that they would be restored completely.

And he's confident that as they respond to the discipline, God is going to confirm them to the end, blameless in Jesus Christ. And so he begins now, verse 10. We jump right into his initial exhortation and rebuke to them.

He says, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. So he's speaking to this congregation. And the first thing he's going to deal with is the issue of division among them.

And he says, I plead with you that you speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, that you be of the same mind. That, of course, is God's ideal. God wants us to live in harmony with one another.

And of course, especially in our local congregations, a local congregation that is divided up is a congregation that is unhealthy and ultimately ineffective because of those kinds of things. And this particular congregation had become divided. Now, Paul goes on and he lets him know what he knows about them from other sources.

He says, For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. So no one knows who Chloe actually was, but there were servants of Chloe who had apparently visited the church in Corinth. Paul is in Ephesus at the time that he wrote this letter.

This is probably at least three years after he had planted the church, if not longer. And now he receives word in Ephesus that there are contentions in the church that he had planted in Corinth. Now, I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul or I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas or I am of Christ.

Cephas is another name for Peter. So here's what happened. There was division in the church and some were claiming allegiance to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Peter, and some were going beyond all that and saying our allegiance is to Christ only.

Now, here's an important thing to understand. It wasn't merely division. In the church, that was the problem.

But it goes deeper than that. It was what it was that caused the division that was a more serious problem. And what it was that caused the division was their desire to be like the world around them.

You see what they were doing now was emulating the society that they had come out of. And this is an area where we see a strong parallel with the modern church. The modern church so often is emulating the world around it rather than seeking to be distinct from and a witness to the world around it.

Now, in the city of Corinth, there were at least 50 different philosophies that were vying for allegiance. And there were a multitude of philosophers who would call disciples after themselves. So the city was

factionalized.

The city was divided up and there were a number of groups in the city that were divided over various philosophies. There were the philosophers and those who were their disciples. So the root problem here in Corinth is that they looked around and they said.

We want to be like them. They've got their philosophers, they've got their favorite teachers. We need to be like that.

And so that was the basis of the division. The basis of the division was to be like the world. And Paul's going to go on and elaborate on that throughout the next three chapters, really.

But this has been a problem historically for the people of God. For some reason or another. The people of God have lived so often with this inferiority complex.

Feeling inferior to the world and wanting to be like the world. You can trace this all the way back to God's people, Israel. Perhaps you remember that time in their history when they were crying out to God for a king.

They wanted to have a king and their desire stemmed from this. We want a king to rule over us like the other nations have. You see, they wanted to be like the other nations.

They weren't content to have God as their king. They wanted a visible king. They wanted to be like the other nations.

This has been a problem, not only with Israel, but of course, this has been a problem with the church. Also, the church so often lives with this inferiority complex and says, in essence, we want to be like the world. We want to have the kinds of things that they have.

So as they looked around in the city of Corinth, there were these number of philosophies and a number of philosophers and their adherence. And so they said, well, we need to model ourselves after the community. We need to set up our church just like the world is set up.

And then as we're going to go on to see what they ended up doing was they sought to reduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to a philosophy rather than to what it was a revelation from God. And so Paul is going to address that at length as we get to verse 17. But he goes on and he says to them, is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Now, of course, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, none of these men were actually involved in any of this at all.

They had not sought adherence to their own particular view. Of course, these men were all like minded. And Paul, again, will point all that out in the future that they were all workers together.

But if you if you look at it, Paul, of course, would have probably had the allegiance from the Gentile majority within the church. Peter would have had the allegiance of many of the Jews within the church. Apollos was a man who was a Jew, but he was an Alexandrian Jew.

Alexandria was was one of the centers of intellectualism of the day. And Apollos, we are told in the book of Acts, was a man who was extremely eloquent. So there were many who would have been greatly impressed by the eloquence of Apollos.

And they would have seen in him a similarity to many of the philosophers around them. So they were divided up over these kinds of things. But Paul is saying to them, in essence, look, we did not come to.

Draw disciples after ourselves, that was that was not our intention. He says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except these two men, Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name.

So he's he's restating. I was not there to gather a crowd to follow me. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus.

Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other for Christ did not send me to baptize. Now, just a quick side note, baptism does have a definite place in the life of a Christian, but it is certainly not essential to salvation. And we see that clearly by Paul's reference to it here.

Paul makes clear that Christ did not send him to baptize. Now, he's not downplaying the importance of baptism. But at the same time, I think he's showing that baptism is not an essential when it comes to salvation.

There are groups today who say that unless you're baptized, you're not actually a Christian. Some groups go even further and say, unless we baptized you, you're not a Christian. But I'm always quick to point this verse out to them.

A baptism is essential for salvation. Why did Paul speak about it like he did here? Deemphasizing it, to say the least. So Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

See, that's the means of salvation. It's the proclamation of the gospel for a man is converted by faith and faith comes by hearing the word of God. And so if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved.

For with the mouth confession is made to salvation and with the heart one believes to righteousness. Baptism is not mentioned there in Romans 10. So now he's going to go on and he's going to deal with this whole issue that was the underlying factor of the divisions.

The issue of their enamoration with human wisdom. And again, here we see the parallel with the modern church. The modern church is enamored with human wisdom and therefore on so many levels is seeking the approval of man.

And in doing so, compromising the clear teaching of scripture. And there are a number of ways that that can be seen. We'll talk about some of them in a moment.

But listen to what he said, for Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words. Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect, not with the wisdom of words. We have to understand the cultural setting in order to understand what Paul means.

As I mentioned, there were many itinerant philosophers at that time and they were masters of rhetoric. They were highly skilled in using words. They were not so much interested in content.

It was delivery that mattered. It was eloquence. It was cleverness of speech.

That was the important thing. These people were so popular at the time. It is said that one of them, a very capable orator, emptied the whole Roman Senate, called him out of session because he was speaking in the area.

They all left their positions in the Senate to go listen to this man speak. He was such a master with words. Now, we probably all have had the experience of hearing someone who is eloquent, someone who is very capable, someone who's very articulate.

But I personally, I really enjoy listening to someone who knows how to use words well. Now, I myself have never mastered that, but I do enjoy it when I hear it in other people. You know, there's something intriguing about it.

There's something fascinating about it. Well, this was something that was quite regular within the cultural context. And what the Corinthians were now looking for was for their leaders to be like those others out in the community.

They were beginning to think that the content wasn't really what mattered. It was the way of expression. And that's what they were putting the priority on.

Therefore, I think Apollos probably had the most adherence within the church because he was, by definition, the most eloquent of them all. But Paul says here, he says, Christ sent me to preach, not with the wisdom of words. Now, as a preacher of the gospel, the contrast would have been tremendous between the apostle and these philosophers.

They, of course, would have had the emphasis on the way they said things versus what they said. The gospel preacher was very blunt. And the message was quite simple.

And this seemed to be offensive to many in the culture. But Paul said that if I were to do that, in effect, I would make the cross of Christ without effect. To decorate the story of the cross with rhetoric and cleverness would have been to make men think more of the language than the facts, more of the speaker than the message.

And this would have this would have undermined the authority of the message. There's a great temptation for preachers to do this, a great temptation because preachers are human. And of course, as human beings, they so often want the approval of their peers.

They want the approval of their fellow man. And so quite often there there has been throughout the church ages, there has been an emphasis put on the actual delivery. And what has ended up happening is people do quite often think more of the language and they think more of the speaker than they do of the message.

If a person preaches the gospel and someone walks away and says, oh, what a brilliant man, that person is not effectively preached the gospel. But you see, that person walks away feeling really good. Oh, aren't I brilliant? I'm so clever.

Oh, they were dazzled. They were mesmerized. See, this is a great temptation for people.

And I think, of course, that temptation would vary from culture to culture. There are some places, of course, where there is no interest in these type of things. There was a great interest in Corinth.

They're in the heart of Greece having this philosophical background. And I think there's a particular temptation in this country as well for this kind of thing, because there is an emphasis in this country on intellectualism. There is an emphasis on philosophy.

There is an emphasis on rhetoric among many and the ability to communicate in a clever manner and so forth. And those who preach the gospel need to be particularly careful in this area. This is why I so greatly admired the late Dr. Lloyd Jones, because he was certainly a man of great brilliance and a man of great oratory power, great eloquence.

He was all of those things, but he purposely did not use those things that he might make the gospel clear to the common man. And so often that's been the failure of the church to make the gospel clear to the common man. And preachers have been trained in the ability to speak eloquently.

No emphasis on content whatsoever. And people will come into the churches and the man would get up to preach. And when the people would leave, no one would know what in the world he said.

It sounded really nice what he said, but we don't know what it was. And then, of course, so often the preacher would feel that he had been very successful in his delivery because that was the purpose. The purpose was to to give an eloquent speech.

I've known people like this and I've listened to them preach and I felt that so often. What they were really doing was gratifying their own ego rather than seeking to really communicate something to the people that were listening to them. I listened to this one man preach quite, quite frequently.

And inevitably, in the course of his message, he would say four or five words that I am certain no one in his audience knew what they meant. And he probably just learned them that week for the sake of inserting them into his message, giving the impression to people that he was intelligent. You see, that's a subtle way of gratifying your own ego.

Anyone who's preaching for gratification of ego has the entirely wrong motivation in preaching and should not be doing it at all. The goal in preaching is to communicate. The truth of God to people in a way that they can understand it.

And interestingly, in this particular nation, when God has worked most powerfully, it's when people have done that very thing. When you think of men like John Wesley or George Whitfield, these men were brilliant men. They were Oxford men.

But they took their gospel to the working class and they made it intelligible, intelligible to them. And that's when great things happen among the people. And I think to some degree, you know, I go out on a limb and saying this, but I think to some degree part of the problem with the church in this country today has been an emphasis on intellectualism in certain quarters and on eloquence and oratory rather than, you know, a desire to really communicate the truth to people.

And then, of course, we could talk about the other extreme. And there are the two extremes. There's the there's the extreme I just mentioned.

But then there's the other extreme where there's no thought given to the message at all. There is no intelligible communication going on whatsoever. And this, of course, is a problem as well, because Christianity is then seen to be stupid and it's anything but stupid.

We need to, I think, faithfully communicate the gospel and we need to do so intelligently. But there's a vast difference between being intelligent and intellectualism. And I think that's one of the things that has affected the church in a negative way.

And this is something that the apostle was aware of in his own day as a potential problem. It was something the Corinthians were enamored by. And so it's something that he went out of his way to avoid doing.

And he showed them the reasons why he avoided doing it. Number one, because it would make the cross of Christ of no effect. So he says this for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

Now, here's where the modern church makes a great mistake. The modern church in trying to appease the world compromises, but yet never does appease the world because the world will never be at peace because the preaching of the cross will always be foolishness to the world. It doesn't matter how you dress it up.

It doesn't matter who delivers it. You know, some people think if I have my list of degrees and then I get up and preach, people are going to say, oh, that must be true because that person is educated. No, the message is always going to be offensive to the natural man.

The message itself is offensive for this reason, because it goes against the grain of human pride. So the message of the cross is foolishness and always will be foolishness to those who are perishing. You're never going to satisfy.

The masses and the tragedy with the modern church is compromised, trying to satisfy the. The masses and subsequently nothing positive ends up happening. Now, the message of the cross, just briefly, what is that? Well, simply the message of the cross is this.

And this is where you see the offense coming in. The message of the cross is that man, in all of his cleverness, in all of his intelligence, in all of his wisdom, in all of his efforts through all of his works, cannot do one thing to merit God's favor. That is the message of the cross.

The message of the cross is that the only possibility of a man being saved is because the son of God died in his place on a cross on Calvary. They see that message. Goes hard against the pride.

Of man. That goes against the grain of human nature, because every person wants to believe that they can somehow commend themselves to God through some effort. Those who are preoccupied with the intellect, they want to believe that they can commend themselves to God through the intellectual process.

They want to believe that they could think their way to God. They want to believe that they can figure it out and that having figured it out, God ought to accept them. God says no.

Other people want to believe that through their good deeds, through their good efforts, they can be accepted by God. But it doesn't matter what you've done. All of your good deeds, all of your deep thoughts, all of these things get you nowhere with God.

That's what the cross says. The cross says you were hopeless. You're a criminal before God.

And the only way of redemption was for someone to die in your place. So that's why this message is so offensive. It's foolishness to those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. You see, this is what God has said all the way along.

And this isn't necessarily a direct quotation from the Old Testament. I think it's more a compilation of what the Old Testament teaches in several places. You can find similar statements in Isaiah 29 and 33 as well.

But as you go through Job, as you go through Psalms and Proverbs and some of the prophets, you find God saying this over and over again, that he would destroy the wisdom of the wise. You see, God is not impressed with human learning. And the man who's impressed with his own intellect is a fool because his intellect was actually given to him as a gift by God.

And to use the gift that God gave him against the one who gave it to him is the height of folly. But that's what man so often does with his mind. God is unimpressed.

He says, where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? You see what Paul is saying is in front of the cross. Where's your philosopher now? Where's your disputer? Where's the wise man? None of this matters. None of this has any bearing on the issues that are the most important.

The issues of eternity. The issues of the soul. The issues of man and his relationship with God.

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 pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. So listen to what the apostle says.

He says this was part of God's plan. Part of God's plan was to show man that he could not arrive at God through his own thinking process in the wisdom of God. The world through wisdom did not know God.

Paul is writing, of course, in the first century A.D. The greatest philosophers that ever were, even to this very day, had long ago passed off the scene. People like Aristotle and Plato and Socrates, people like this, the fathers of philosophy. But the fathers of philosophy were unable to arrive at a knowledge of God.

And so God used that philosophical age to bring men to the point. Desirably to the point of realization that through wisdom they could not find God. The saddest thing in all of the history of the church is when the church embraced philosophy.

In order to help them understand God. And early on in the history of the church, many of the church fathers embraced the Greek philosophers. They Christianized Aristotle.

And they look to Aristotle for understanding in almost every realm, apart from the simple things that the Bible might deal with on a spiritual level. How to pray and how to have your sins forgiven and things like that. But there was an embracing early on and there has been a continuation of that throughout the ages.

The church has been latching on to philosophy, which is in the way that I'm using it here. Human wisdom as opposed to God's wisdom. Wisdom that originates with man and that is separate from and actually in opposition to the revelation of God.

The church is still latching on to that today. The whole higher critical movement that developed in the middle 1700s was born out of an embracing of philosophy. Human wisdom that brought the church to a place of concluding that we can have no confidence in the Bible.

The Bible isn't truly a revelation from God. It is not the word of God putting man's wisdom over against the scriptures. Contrary to all the evidence.

It's an interesting study, if you want to take it upon yourself sometime to go back and see what the higher critics had to say. And how every argument that they put forth. Has been disproved.

And you can see these men who were supposedly the great thinkers of the time embracing one lie after another. Under the banner of intelligence. Making statements such as Moses could not have written the books that are attributed to him because there was at the time of Moses.

No such thing as an elaborate law code. And. The archaeologists have found several elaborate codes of law that go back even to the time of Abraham.

These men made statements like Abraham was a fictitious character and of the Caldees, where he supposedly hailed from, did not exist. They didn't have cities and things like that in those days. And then, of course, as time went on, the archaeologists found all the evidence for it.

But the funny thing is that those same arguments are still being put forth by many today. They've been answered ages ago, but they're still putting forth the same arguments. And these are men who are supposedly leaders in the church.

But why are they doing it? I think the reason they're doing it is to have acceptance with the world. They do not want to be seen as someone who is unintelligent or something like that. I read an article recently in one of the evangelical publications, and it was entitled Why Some Evangelicals Believe in Evolution.

They went on this long, elaborate article on why they believe in evolution. And I'll tell you why some evangelicals believe in evolution is because they want the approval of the world. That's why they believe in it, not because there's any actual factual basis for it, but because they want the approval of the world.

They want to be seen by the world as we are really intelligent. We're not the stupid people that you think we are as Christians. And they're afraid to take a stand on the word of God and to believe God over men.

It's a sad day in the church when church leaders are in that kind of a position. But I believe that that is the root of the problem. And that problem existed in Corinth.

And Paul will address them at one point, and he will say to them, You are wise in Christ, but we, the apostles, are fools for Christ. And that was their problem. They did not want to be recognized as fools for Christ.

They wanted to have the praise of the world. That was the problem. And that's the problem with so much that's happening in the church today.

They want the praise of the world. Tony was just telling me that he was watching a service just a few minutes ago, one of the religious services on the telly. And the person doing it got up and talked about, you know, the acceptance of all who were there, regardless of sexual preference and things of this nature and so forth.

It's just simply a compromise with the world. We don't want to be out of step with the world. We don't want to be seen as being old fashioned or anything like that.

It's a sad day. But God has brought things about so that through wisdom, man could not find God. Man cannot think his way to God.

God had to reveal himself. It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. Through the foolishness of the message preached, the message preached is this man who was crucified.

Died as a common criminal is the only hope for the world. And you can put all of your degrees in your back pocket because they mean nothing. They'll never avail the world anything.

This crucified man is the only hope for the human race. That is the message that is to be preached for the Jews request a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified.

So the Jews requesting a sign and that, of course, was seen in the public ministry of Jesus. Jesus claimed his claim was to be the Messiah. They said, show us something.

Moses, they said, Moses fed our fathers in the wilderness. You show us something. Jesus said, Moses didn't give you that bread.

My father, he gives you the true bread. But you see, they were looking for something spectacular. Moses destroyed Egypt.

Moses led us through the Red Sea. Moses conquered Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Jesus, what are you going to do if you're the Messiah? Show us a sign.

Jesus was doing all kinds of signs. But the only sign they were interested in was a sign that was similar to the sign Moses had given. That was, you remember, the deliverance from Egypt.

The only sign they were interested in was that Jesus would get them out from under the authority of the Romans. If you're the Messiah, then show us a sign. Exert your power and free us from this Roman bondage.

The Jews seek after a sign. The Greeks seek after wisdom. These two groups are still with us today.

There are people who say, I won't believe unless I see a sign, unless I see something miraculous. And there are people who say, I won't believe unless I can figure it all out. The rational mind, unless I can make sense of it, unless it sounds good to my reasoning process, I'll never believe it.

Jews request a sign. Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified.

Now, this was a contradiction in terms as far as the Jews were concerned. Christ, yes. Crucified, yes.

But those two terms could never go together in Jewish thinking. No, the Christ was the king. He was the one who was going to come and subdue our enemies.

And yet Paul is putting these two things together. Christ crucified. That was a stumbling block to the Jew.

And to the Greek, it was foolishness for several reasons. The Greeks, their their concept of God was, first of all, that God was entirely indifferent or the gods plural were entirely indifferent to the concerns of men. So the whole concept of an incarnation would have been ludicrous to the Greeks.

God would never become a man. The gods are happy. They're content.

They would never come and dwell among us. They just couldn't understand any reason for something like that taking place. The Jews generally or the Greeks generally thought also that anything material was evil.

So the thought that a god would take upon himself material form in the truest sense, that was absolute absurdity. And when Paul says to the Greeks, foolishness, the word here is a very strong word. And it's a word that could even be translated madness to them.

It was the height of madness to teach that God would become a man and that somehow getting himself killed by his enemies would bring about the salvation of the world. They saw this as the height of absurdity. But to those who are called both the Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

I love that statement. The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. The gospel is the foolishness of God.

It's wiser than all men's philosophies combined. And the weakness of God is the cross. And yet the cross is stronger than any power in the universe.

Now, in verse 26, on through the remainder of the chapter, Paul is going to bring these people back down to earth because they've been puffed up, they've been elevated. They've sought to reduce Christianity to a philosophy. They've exalted their own particular teacher.

And now they're following these different men. They're going along and they're thinking we are really something. Very, very proud.

Paul is going to bring them back down to earth. He says, for you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. You see, they had forgotten.

Who they were. You know, this has happened. In the lives of many.

God will take a person. And he will exalt that person. Take him out of obscurity, take him from nowhere.

A person who is nothing in the eyes of the world. And God will take that person and exalt them and use them. And sometimes that person can forget where they actually came from.

And they can begin to think that somehow this all has to do with who I am. And what I've done. You know, it's a difficult thing when God starts using a person.

Because all kinds of interesting new temptations come your way. And one of the temptations is to think that God is using you because of who you are. Know this.

As God works in your life and as he uses you, it will always be in spite of you, never because of you. The Corinthians had forgotten that. They had come from basically that that lower strata of society.

But now they've come into the church and God's been using them and working in their lives. And they've got gifts of the spirit. God's given them some knowledge and some wisdom.

And suddenly they're thinking somehow that this has to do with me and who I am. Paul says, Oh, brother, and let me remind you. Let me remind you of where you came from.

Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble. According to the flesh. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty and the base things of the world and the things which are despised. God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence. This is the reason why God has done it in this way.

Now, I want you to notice. Paul does not say that no wise or mighty or noble have been called. There were people certainly from those classes who were also part of the church at that time.

We can look in the scriptures. We find that Dionysius, who was a doctor of philosophy, he had become a disciple. Sergius Paulus, who was the pro council of on the island of Crete, he had become a disciple.

There were certain noble women that had become disciples. There were people, of course, from that upper strata of society that had become disciples. But not many.

We'll talk about that at length next time as to why those kinds of people are not generally found among God's people. It's not because God doesn't love them or desire that they be part of his family. The problem lies with them.

I'll give you a hint. It's a pride problem. You see, because God has set things up so that no flesh can glory in his presence.

But of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. And the wisest man in the world is the man who submits his life to Jesus Christ.

That's the wisest person in the world. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Bible tells us.

So you might not have a degree. You might not even be educated. But you are wiser than all of the philosophers combined together.

If you have embraced Christ, because you have then embraced the wisdom of God. And the wisdom of God is, of course, the ultimate wisdom. Christ has been made to us righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

That as it is written, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord. That's what God delights in. People who boast about his goodness and his grace.

His love and his mercy. And so Paul brings these people back down to earth. And God helped many in the church today to be brought back down to earth.

And to realize, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not putting down a person who has a degree.

I'm not saying that you can't do that or any of that. But I am saying this. If that's what you're trusting in.

If that's what you're using as a means of commendation. If that's what you're falling back on and thinking, this is what makes me important. This is what gives me the right to speak to people.

This is what will give me authority. No, you've missed. You've missed it completely.

The wisest man is the man who acknowledges that God alone is wise. Let's be found there. Glory not in ourselves.

Or in our accomplishments. Or in any of those things. But glorying in the fact that we know the Lord.

And that he's called us.

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