

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 4

by Brian Brodersen

Paul emphasizes the importance of humility and accountability to God, rather than human opinion, in his response to the Corinthians' problem of human wisdom versus the wisdom of God.

Duration: 59:43

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:11, 1 Corinthians 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 3:2, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 3:23 - 4:1, 1 Corinthians 4:21

Topics: "Church Unity", "Servant Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the larger argument and thought patterns in the Bible, rather than getting caught up in individual verses. He explains that the fourth chapter of the book being discussed is the final stage of a long argument that began in chapter one. The speaker addresses the issue of the Corinthians boasting in different apostles and specifically focuses on the negative attitude they had towards the apostle Paul. He encourages the audience to consider themselves as servants of Christ and to avoid favoritism or division among believers.

Transcript

Let's pick up in verse 21 of chapter 3 in order to get a good sense of the context. Paul says, Therefore, 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 things present, or things to come, all are yours, and you are Christ, and Christ is God's. Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ, and as stewards of the mysteries of God.

Now, it's really important when we're studying our Bibles to seek to always maintain the proper context and to follow the continuity of thought. And especially in Paul's epistles, we find that there is always a continuity to what Paul is saying. He is dealing with various issues, and having dealt with one issue, he moves on to the other.

Sometimes it takes quite a bit of time for him to finally cover an issue entirely. We tend a lot of times to read our Bibles chapter by chapter, and we tend sometimes even to think that that's how the thought process is carried out in a chapter by chapter manner, but that's not the case at all. And so sometimes you have to even disregard the fact that the Bible is divided into chapters, and you have to try to follow the thought from beginning to end.

Now, this fourth chapter is the final stage in a long argument that began back in chapter one, verse 11. And so what we're wanting to do is we're wanting to understand exactly what Paul is saying. And in order to understand it, we have to look at the entire argument.

And that's what we've been doing over the course of the past several weeks. The primary issue that's being dealt with here in these first four chapters is the issue of human wisdom versus the wisdom of God. And the Corinthians and particularly the leaders within the Corinthian church, they had become very impressed with human wisdom.

And they had begun to embrace human wisdom, and they sought to turn the gospel into something similar to a philosophy. They lived, of course, in a center of philosophy. And so they were taking the gospel and they were beginning to interpret the gospel more like a philosophy than an actual revelation from God.

They had also taken and in their own minds, they had exalted the apostles into a position of philosophers. And then they had lined themselves up under the various men that they preferred. So Paul is dealing with that.

And his closing arguments for his case are presented now here in chapter four. And again, I think it's important that we always when we're studying our Bibles, even individually, we try to find the arguments and the thought patterns. And we and we seek to follow the continuity and to really get at what the apostle is saying.

Sometimes you will find that even Bible commentators are at times guilty of perhaps missing the forest because of the trees or missing the trees because of the forest. And what I mean by that is sometimes what a Bible commentator will do is they will take and get so involved in each particular verse inspecting very thoroughly the trees, but they can't see the forest. In other words, they don't see the bigger argument.

They don't see the continuity in what is being said. And that's quite common, actually. And I, of course, have been guilty of doing the same thing.

And sometimes it's hard to follow the thought, but it's our responsibility to really get at what the Bible is saying, not just what we think it's saying. So that's one possibility. The other possibility is to do it in the opposite.

You missed the trees because of the forest. You're so preoccupied with just kind of a general idea of what's being said that you miss some of the specifics. So we want to have that balanced and that accurate approach in our study.

We want to see both what is being said in the larger sense, but we want to recognize also that in the course of what's being said in the larger sense, there are plenty of real specific things that we can take and apply to ourselves as well. So picking up in chapter four, Paul says, Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ. So he just had told them that they were not to boast in men.

And that is what had happened there. They had taken and were beginning to prefer one apostle over the other. And in this particular case, they had developed a real negative attitude toward the apostle Paul.

And as we look back at the chapters we've already covered, we find that they were accusing him of not being eloquent like some of the others. They were accusing him of not really being wise or academic. They accused him of feeding them with milk instead of with solid food.

To them, solid food was something that was more appealing to the intellect. And so they had really developed somewhat of a hostile attitude toward Paul himself. And so here he says, Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. So what Paul now reminds them of in his closing argument here is, First of all, he is a servant of Christ and he is a steward of the mystery of God. And the idea behind both words that he uses here, the word servant and the word steward, is that his ultimate accountability is to Jesus Christ.

And that he has been given a position by Jesus Christ of management. That's what the words imply. The word servant and the word steward, both of them imply a position of management.

So Paul sees himself as one that God has made a manager over his affairs. And then he reminds the Corinthians that the most important thing is that he is faithful in the position that God has called him to. So really what he's doing here is he's letting them know that he is God's servant.

He is God's servant. And because he is God's servant, he is ultimately accountable to God. And therefore, he's not really all that concerned with what they think of him.

His goal is to please Jesus Christ. We see this in Paul consistently. Paul was the kind of person who wanted to please the Lord.

And so everything he did, he kept Jesus in mind. As a minister of the gospel, that is so vitally important to remember that I'm not serving men. I'm not really accountable to men.

I'm serving God and I'm finally accountable to him. You see, because if I think I'm accountable to men, then two things can happen. Number one is I can disregard God's standard.

And as long as I'm pleasing people, I can be content with that. Or on the other hand, I might if I'm forgetting that I'm God's servant, I might be so concerned with what people would think of me that I conform my life entirely to what they expect. And this has happened many times in the history of the church.

The church is not a democratic institution. God is in charge of the church. Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

And a minister of the gospel is to be a representative of Jesus Christ and is to present to God's people, not his own opinion or his own feelings about things or his own words, but really is to present what God has to say. Sometimes that's going to be very palatable to people. Sometimes it's going to be something that they receive quite joyously.

Other times it's going to be quite the opposite. There are going to be times when it's going to be quite hard to swallow, actually. It's going to be difficult because it convicts me.

It tells me that I'm wrong. Paul was dealing with the church in Galatia and they had been carried away by certain false teachers and Paul rebuked them for it and he spoke very firmly to them. And this made them angry.

And then the apostle asked this question. He said, have I become your enemy because I have told you the truth? And a minister of the gospel has to be willing to put himself on the line in that area, has to be willing

to become an enemy of certain people for the sake of the truth. And this is where we see a great problem in the modern situation.

People, of course, want to be accepted and people in ministry want to be accepted. They don't want to be criticized or seen as an unpleasant person or whatever. So a lot of times they compromise the message so that they will not receive any sort of disagreement or hostility from the people.

But in doing so, they fail to honor God and to please God. And that's entirely unlike the apostle Paul. And that's what he's saying to them here.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. Paul understood that faithfulness to Jesus Christ was the most important thing for a minister of the gospel. And so that's what he's reminding them of.

He's saying, in essence, I'm not doing this to please you. I'm doing this to please the Lord. And my work is with the Lord and I'm accountable to him.

But with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. So they were judging him. They had passed judgment upon him.

What he's saying really is, you know what? I don't really care what your opinion of me is. I'm not really bothered by that. Again, he could say that because he understood his position.

His position was that of a steward. He was a manager. He was managing the things of God.

The mysteries of God, these were not his own opinions or his own views on things. So it's a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I don't even judge myself.

For I know nothing against myself, yet I'm not justified by this. But he who judges me is the Lord. And this is an amazing statement, really.

Paul says, I know nothing against myself. Paul is a man of tremendous integrity. He was a man of such integrity that he could evaluate his own life and say, I don't know anything against myself.

Now, I think for all of us, we would all agree that that's. That would be a difficult thing for any of us to say as we would maybe evaluate ourselves in light of the call of God on our life. Could any of us say, I don't know anything against myself? I know I couldn't.

I could find plenty of things against myself. But this is where Paul was. His commitment was such that he could say, I know nothing against myself, but I'm not justified by this.

See, Paul realized that even though he might not know anything against himself, he realized that he could himself be self-deceived. So therefore, he put aside even a good evaluation of himself. And he said, I'll leave that in the hands of the Lord.

The Lord is the one who judges not only our actions, but he judges our motives. He's the one who is not only concerned with what we say or do, but he's the one who's concerned with what motivates us. He looks beyond our mere actions and even our words.

He looks into our hearts. And of course, the Bible reminds us of that over and over again. The Lord said, I am the one who test the hearts and the minds.

We're told that the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. And it divides between the soul and the spirit. And it searches.

And actually, in Hebrews chapter four there, the word is that it is a critique. The word of God critiques me. It is my critic.

It tests my mind. It tests my motives. So Paul, understanding that, he said, for I know nothing against myself.

Yet I am not justified by this. But he who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time.

Until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts, then each one's praise will come from God. So he says, don't don't judge me either way. Don't criticize me negatively.

Don't praise me. Don't judge me in a kind of a way that would be improper. He said the Lord knows the heart and so leave those things with the Lord who will make the final assessment when he comes.

Now, these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes. So all of these analogies that the apostle has been using going back to the third chapter where you remember he talked about one plants and one waters. He talked about being a builder.

And then in the beginning of the fourth chapter, he talked about being a servant and a steward. He's using these kinds of analogies to show them the position of himself and the other apostles. In other words, what he's saying simply is we are nothing.

That's the whole point that he's trying to get across to them, because their problem was they had taken and exalted these men to. An improper place in their minds and Paul says this is all wrong. Now, this is, of course, what happens in the world, and this is what happened in the world around them.

It was a world of philosophy. There were many philosophers. And of course, the community was divided up under the various philosophers and they would pit one philosopher against the other.

And, you know, there would be one who would have the most devotees. And that was, you know, the one that everyone would go running after. Paul says all of this is all of this is wrong.

This is not what the church is all about. Church leaders aren't to be elevated and exalted and seen as being above the people. Church leaders are simply Christians who are just performing the task that God has given them to do, which is really not any greater in a sense than any other task that any other Christian has to do.

And this has been one of the great curses on the church throughout history, that church leadership has been elevated. And there's been this dichotomy between what has been called the clergy and the laity. And so the clergy are generally seen, even to this very day, to be the people who are closest to God.

And the laity are the rest of the people who need to go to the clergy to get access to God. This is all so contrary to the Bible. Even the apostles themselves, these men who were appointed by God to be those who would lay the foundation of the church, even they themselves would not allow anything like that.

I think of the example of Peter. When Peter, perhaps you remember the story, it's recorded in the 10th chapter of Acts. When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, Cornelius was a Roman centurion who had seen in a vision an angel and the angel told him to call for Peter because Peter would give him information by which he and his household could be saved.

And so Cornelius, he calls for Peter. He sends a delegation over to the house of Simon the Tanner and Peter comes back. And when he enters into the house of Cornelius, Cornelius falls down at his feet and he's paying homage to him.

And Peter, he grabbed him, pulled him up and he said, Get up, I myself am a man. You see, right there, Peter was showing that this is improper. This is not right.

I'm just a man. I'm a servant of God and I am not superior to you. I'm not above you.

I don't have any greater access to God than you do. That is the message that the apostles consistently put forth. How things ever became so messed up in the church, I don't know.

Well, I do know they ignored the Bible and followed the pattern of the world, just like the Corinthians were doing in these early days. But, you know, something that I've often thought about has to do with the popes, who, of course, allow people to bow before them and to kiss their ring and things of this nature. Now, they claim to be the descendants of Peter, but they certainly do not follow his example, do they? Because Peter wouldn't allow such a thing to happen.

But they do allow that. But the popes aren't the only ones that are guilty of it. Many people in church leadership have the attitude that we are somehow superior to everyone else and expect from the laity to be elevated and exalted.

But it's an entirely opposite attitude of the apostles. And that's what Paul is saying right here. All of these figures that he's used.

That of one planting, one watering and all of these kinds of things, all of these figures, all of these figures that he's using are representative of of just servants performing menial tasks, farmers and and slaves. So that's the category that Paul is putting himself in. He's saying, I'm just a slave.

I'm just a servant of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the word he uses here in the first verse of the fourth chapter, the word for servants, the Greek word is a word that literally referred to those men who were galley slaves. They rode those massive Roman ships, you know, those men who were there confined to the galley.

And when the ship couldn't sail or would go into battle, they would be the men who would be rowing that that position was reserved for the lowest slave. That's the word that the apostle uses here. We could even translate the word.

Let a man consider us as under rowers. Of Christ were galley slaves. So Paul is trying to give them the right perspective.

And then back in verse six, he says that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. So that's his whole point. I've used these figures so that you can learn in us not to think of man beyond what is written.

But that's the natural human tendency to think more of ourselves and a lot of times to think more of other people than we ought to. We ought to have a sober opinion of ourselves and a sober opinion of others. Now, the Bible, of course, allows a place to respect other people.

And to to respect them, actually, for people who faithfully serve in church leadership. Paul, in writing to Timothy, said now the elders who serve well count them worthy of double honor. But it was never to be this kind of honor that's given in the world where men are exalted and put in a position other than what God ever intended.

When he says here not to think beyond what is written, two passages came to mind when I read over that one from Psalm 39, verse five. Indeed, you have made my days as hand breaths and my ages as nothing before you. Certainly, every man at his best state is but vapor.

That puts it all in perspective, doesn't it? Every man at his best state is but vapor. Now, over in the 62nd Psalm, a similar thing is said. Psalm 62, verses eight and nine, trust in him at all times, you people pour out your heart before him.

God is a refuge for us. Surely men of low degree are a vapor. Men of high degree are a lie.

If they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than air. So this is what Paul is talking about. This is the estimation of man.

But the tendency of man is to think of himself more highly than he ought to. And then, of course, at times to think of other people more highly than they ought to. In writing to the Romans, Paul reminded us that we're to think soberly of ourselves.

We're to have a right perspective of ourselves. So back here, that's what he's getting at, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against another. They were puffed up.

They were proud of their allegiance to Apollos at this point and their downplaying of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. But Paul says this is all utterly contrary to what is written for who makes you differ from one another. So this attitude was not only toward Paul and Apollos, but it was something that had trickled down.

And now they were being divided up against one another. And all this has happened so frequently in the history of the church. And you can find even today people who you can't even have a conversation with them about the Lord because they're so hung up on some man's idea.

There are some people who won't even necessarily refer to themselves as Christians, but they'll refer to themselves under a certain denominational heading. You know, when you meet a person who says, I'm a Baptist or I'm a Methodist or I'm any of those kinds of things, not speaking negatively, necessarily on those denominations. But when a person says that right there, you understand that they really don't.

They don't know what the scriptures say because I'm a Christian. If I happen to be a Baptist, well, that's sort of incidental. And that's fine if you're a Baptist, but don't be a Baptist first, be a Christian first, then you'd be a Baptist or a Methodist or a Calvary Chapel or whatever, whatever category you line up under.

That's fine, but we have to see all these denominations and things. These are all the result of men and denominations are not necessarily bad. They're not necessarily good in a sense.

They're they're neutral. It just depends on where they stand and what they emphasize. I don't think that just because they're denominations, that's essentially a problem.

I think denominations can be fine. People are different. They prefer to relate under different kinds of circumstances and things like that.

And sometimes denominations will help people because of their structure. They'll help people to worship more effectively because they present the kind of environment that they feel better in. You know, I particularly like the environment that we have here, but there are other people that they don't like this environment at all.

It's too loose for them. They want something with more structure. They want something that's, you know, more more sober, something that's higher.

And there's there's nothing necessarily the matter with that. In a sense, that's just a matter of preference. As long as we have the essentials down, those things are incidental.

So we have to be careful, though, that we don't elevate those differences. And particularly when men are involved. And I've mentioned these things in the past, and it's probably not so relevant to our situation here.

But one of the things that I find has historically been an issue, especially in evangelicalism, is the whole Calvinistic Arminian positions. And people, again, dividing up under men and under theological systems. And sometimes you have Christians in both camps, but they can't really relate or fellowship with each other because of certain doctrinal differences based on one man's theological opinions versus another man's theological opinions.

And so you have people who say, I'm a Calvinist. And when they make that statement, they're they're sort of isolating themselves and excluding those who aren't Calvinist. Not everybody does that who claims to be a Calvinist.

But those who do that just show the immaturity in their own life. If you choose to follow more of a Calvinistic line of theology, that's fine. But don't think that you're any better than anyone else because you do.

Don't think that you're any more accepted or someone who doesn't necessarily agree with you theologically is, because of that, less of a Christian or something. You see, those are the kinds of things that we have to really guard ourselves against. And that's just one realm.

It can happen in a number of areas. Some people are very proud of the fact that they don't speak with tongues, very proud of that. And they they are very critical of people who do.

So I heard one fairly famous American Bible teacher talk about tongues one day. I was listening to him on the radio. He was talking about tongues and he didn't want to make a real dogmatic statement against tongues.

But he said this. He said, I'm proud to say that I've never spoken in tongues. That's an interesting perspective.

I'm proud to say that. I'm proud to say I've never been filled with the Holy Spirit. You know, it would be something like the equivalent of that.

Why would you be proud of that? So there are people who, you know, that's their position. And everyone who speaks in tongues is less of a Christian in their mind. But then, of course, we have the reverse of it, don't we? There are people who do speak in tongues and anyone who doesn't, their Christianity is suspect.

Some groups definitely say if you don't speak in tongues, you're not baptized in the Holy Spirit. Other groups will go beyond, say, if you don't speak with tongues, I don't think you're even saved. I mean, these are just such absurd things.

But these are the kinds of absurd things that have divided the body of Christ and really resulted in a bad witness to the world, haven't they? We have to really be careful when it comes to these things. I received a phone call the other night from a person I didn't know him, but we had a mutual friend and we were talking. And he told me that he attends a particular church and he's actually involved at that church.

He's on staff there. It's a church that I would not agree with at all theologically on probably most things. But yet, as I had a conversation with this person, it was obvious to me I was talking to a Christian.

It was obvious to me that this person was genuinely a fellow believer. And I had to purpose in my own mind to not take a negative view of this person because of their association with this particular church. We have to do that sometimes.

So we're not to be puffed up one against another. For who makes you differ from another and what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? This is a great statement here and one that has a broad application for who makes you differ from one another. It has its first application, obviously, within the local fellowship.

And there are times even in local congregations, as was the case here in Corinth, where there was a division in the congregation itself, people dividing up one against another and people seeing themselves as better, more spiritual. And yet Paul reminds them, what do you have that you did not receive? You see, if we always keep that perspective, then there's never really an opportunity for pride to come in. If I remember that whatever gifts I have.

And to whatever extent God might use me, it really is simply because of him, not because of me, what do I have that I did not receive? So I might have a more obvious gift than someone else. Or I might prophesy more frequently or I might be more articulate as a Bible teacher or something like that. Or I might have a better voice and be able to worship the Lord through my voice more efficiently.

At least I might think that. But you see, all of these things are really just gifts from God to each one of us, whether they be gifts that are part of our nature or gifts that are of a purely supernatural nature. It's all a gift from God.

It's all something that he's given to us. This is why the pride of man is so absurd. Think of people who are proud of the way they look.

Now, what did they have to do with the way they look? It's the genetic thing. It's something that God created in them. Some people are proud of their intellectual capacities, but their intellectual capacities are

something that they were born with.

Some people are proud of their their artistic abilities, but yet all of these things really are gifts from God intended by God to be used for the glory of God. And so these people who are outside of the church who boast in these types of things will one day realize how foolish their boasting was, because even their gifts in that natural sense were given to them by God for the purpose of glorifying God. And one day they'll come to realize that and suffer the consequences of not glorifying God.

But then back in the church, we have to always keep this in mind. However, God uses me because there is a tendency, I'll be very frank with you. There is a tendency when God uses you to somehow think that it was because of you.

It's not an easy thing to have people always telling you how wonderful you are, how much you help them, how much you minister to them. And if we don't watch ourselves, we can easily start to think, oh, I am such a wonderful person, aren't I? In my case, God gave me a very perceptive wife to keep the perspective just right. And when I start thinking about how wonderful I am, she's there to remind me of how wonderful I'm not.

And that's good. But with all of us and and as you grow in your faith and as you experience God gives God's gifts in your life and as you begin to be used by the Lord in a number of ways, Satan will come along and say, oh, aren't you wonderful? Oh, you are spiritual, aren't you? You're more spiritual than that person you sit next to at church. You know that.

But you have to resist that. It'll come. You have to resist all of that and recognize that whatever I have, it's a gift from God.

And if I've received it, why do I boast as if I had not received it? So Paul is bringing the whole thing back into perspective. My gifts, the gifts of Apollos and Peter, this is just simply what God has called us to do. You have gifts.

They differ from the gifts of another, but they are simply that they're God's gifts to you. And a gift, remember, is not something that you have earned. It's not something that you've merited.

I find that there's such a fine line in my own life between thinking I deserve something from God. And realizing that I deserve nothing when I when I'm really consistent and faithful in prayer, I get this subtle thought that God owes me something because I have been so faithful in prayer. And that's not only a personal thing, but we can enlarge it and it can take place, you know, even among Christian people collectively.

Oh, we really pray at our church. Therefore, we deserve the blessing of God upon us. You see, anytime I think I deserve anything from God except judgment, I'm misled.

That's the only thing I ever really deserve. We never should relate to God on the basis of merit. If we're wise, we never will.

I always must relate to God on the basis of mercy and grace. Because the only thing I merit from God is his judgment. That's what I earn for being a sinner.

It's what I earned for all the inconsistency in me, all this, the self love and those things. That's what I deserve. But God doesn't give me what I deserve.

Mercy can be defined as that itself, not getting what you deserve. When we say, God, be merciful to me, what we're saying is, God, don't give me what I deserve. Grace takes it even a bit further.

Grace is not merely not getting what you deserve, but grace is getting what you do not deserve. You see, God's gone a step beyond mercy with us. He not only does not give us what we deserve, that's judgment, but he gives us what we don't deserve.

That's his blessing. That's his love. That's his kindness and these gifts and things.

I look at my own life and I recognize God has given me certain gifts. But a long time ago, I realized that it didn't have anything to do with me. I know people who God has used in great ways.

I have personal friends who, you know, from a human standpoint, I mean, they're doing tremendous things for God. I have a friend who, you know, regularly gets an opportunity to address tens of thousands of people in the name of Jesus Christ. And to stand back and to look at this person, you know, the natural tendency is to try to figure out how did he get God to let him do that? You know, what is it in him? And, you know, I want to find that out and emulate that or, you know, something like that.

But knowing the person as well as I know him, I know for sure why he gets to do this. It's just because God wants him to and no other reason. You think of somebody like Billy Graham, he's addressed more people in the name of Jesus Christ than anyone in the history of the world.

And if you asked him, why did God choose you to do that? Well, he's a man who has the right perspective. He would answer, I don't know. It wasn't because I earned it, wasn't because I deserved it.

And that's true with anyone and everyone. We have to keep that perspective. The Corinthians had forgotten that.

And that was the root of so many of the problems that they were having. Now, he says to them in verse eight, you are already full. You are already rich.

You have reigned as kings without us. And indeed, I could wish you did reign that we also might reign with you. Now, here's where Paul is driving.

He's driving things home for them. And the apostle Paul uses quite often. He uses irony and he uses sarcasm.

And that's what he's doing right here. He's really he's rebuking them. He says, you are already full.

You are already rich. You have reigned as kings without us. And indeed, I could wish you did reign.

Said you think you've reigned. You think you've attained. You think you have.

Reached the pinnacle of spirituality. He said, I wish you really had. I wish you had reigned as kings because then we would be with you.

He's he's being sarcastic with them because their thinking was that they had attained to the pinnacle of spirituality and they had now risen above Paul himself. That was their attitude. Oh, yeah, Paul, he led us to

the Lord.

He knew those elementary things, but we've surpassed him now. We're more spiritual than the apostle Paul. That was their mentality.

And so he's sarcastically speaking to them. And this is what he says, for I think that God has displayed us the apostles last as men condemned to death. Now, look what he's doing.

He's saying, I want to give you. A realistic picture of apostleship, because, of course, apostleship for them was something that was coveted. This was, you know, it was like reaching the top of the ladder.

Oh, to be an apostle, that's that's the highest place in the organization. That's where we're all fighting to get to. Because of their distorted view of what it was to be in church leadership.

But Paul says, let me give you an accurate perspective. God has displayed the apostles last as men condemned to death, for we have been made a spectacle both to the world or made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. Now, listen to what he says.

We are fools for Christ. But you, oh, you are wise in Christ. He's speaking sarcastically to them.

This is the position that they've come to. They've brought the world and the mentality of the world into the church, and now that the church in their mind has become respectable in society and they are seen as wise in Christ. This is one of the big problems in the modern church, wanting to be wise in Christ.

Not in the biblical sense, but in a worldly sense. I was reading an article a few weeks back in one of the local evangelical publications and the title of of the article was Why Some Evangelicals Believe in Evolution. And I was very tempted to write into this magazine and state the truth about why some evangelicals believe this dogma.

The reason is the same as Paul states here. Because they want to be seen as wise in the eyes of the world and do not want to be reckoned as fools for Christ. See, look at the apostolic position.

The apostle said, we are fools for Christ. You see, it goes back to the same old thing. The world is never going to accept the church.

And until the church realizes that and ceases trying to be acceptable with the world, the church will never be able to function properly. Because in trying to be accepted by the world, you have to compromise with the world. You have to embrace the world to varying degrees.

And as long as you embrace the world, bring the world into the church, you quench the spirit, and subsequently the church can never progress, it can't move on, it can't grow, it can't be what God intended it to be. Not until we're willing to take the position of being fools for Christ can we ever expect the church to do anything. But the great temptation in the church today is to accommodate the world.

It's it's been an age old battle. It was the battle right back here in the first century, and it hasn't changed at all. But this is the the contrasting positions here are the contrast is between the right position and the wrong position.

That's what Paul's showing. So the right position is to be a fool for Christ. The wrong position is to be wise in Christ in the sense that you're going to win the world's favor.

So we are weak, but you are strong. You are distinguished. But we are dishonored to the present hour.

We both hunger and thirst and we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we labor working with our own hands being reviled. We bless being persecuted. We endure being slandered.

We respond in kindness. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. That is Paul's estimation of apostolic ministry and what the world will think of it.

He's putting them in their place. And I know this because someone some time ago, quite a few years ago, I would imagine wrote up a fictitious application for a candidate who was seeking to obtain a position of pastoring a church. And they wrote up this application based on the statements of the Apostle Paul found in the New Testament and concluded that his application would not have been accepted by the vast majority of churches.

The Apostle Paul would not have been allowed a pastorate in the moderate in the modern church, far too radical for the modern church. Oh, the guy's been in jail. What kind of a well, you know, we're looking for someone a little more respectable than that.

He says he's lived on the streets. He's been homeless. So I'm not interested in anyone like that.

What university did he go to? He didn't put that in here. Oh, well, that's a problem right there. And I think that there's absolute truth to that.

There's absolute truth to it, because, again, the world has infiltrated the church. The church has opened its arms and said, we want your values. We want your idea of things.

And this is why the church has been such a mess. I've just finished to two volumes on church history in the last couple of weeks, just out of interest reading over church history again. And it is just pathetic.

It is so pathetic. The humanists, their greatest weapon against Christians is church history, truthfully, because church history is such a sham. It's so contrary to the New Testament.

And why is that? The answer is simple. It's because early on the problems that the Corinthians were dealing with, the whole church had to deal with, and they embraced the world instead of following the scriptures. And so by the time you just move out maybe 200 years from the time of Jesus, which isn't really that long of a period of time, but 200 years after the time of Christ, the church the visible church in the world did not look anything like the church has revealed in the New Testament.

And the further you go into history, you remember Paul makes reference back here to you have reigned as kings. Well, there was a point in a large portion of Western history where that was the exact position of the church. The church was reigning as a king.

The popes, they were they were rulers. They were ruling Europe. And, you know, so often when you listen to a person coming from a secular background or a humanistic background and, you know, they're they're criticizing the church and, you know, there's so much criticism of Western culture today and all of the oppression that the West has inflicted upon the other peoples and and all of it done in the name of Christianity.

You know what? That's really true. We can't argue against that from any kind of, you know, church history basis. Our only argument is that whatever these people claim to be, they were not Christians.

One of the I know I'm going on. I'm going to finish in just a second. But one of the things in the US, there's a very active religious movement known as the religious right.

And, you know, there's there's a major battle going on in the United States between humanism, secularism and this this religious right. And one of the things that the people on the right seek to to prove is that the foundations of the country were Christian and the founding fathers were Christians. And in some cases, they're right.

Some of them were some of them were not. But in one of the history books that my my children were using for their classes, they they talk, you know, they're trying to justify biblical principles and things, you know, being implemented and back into the government and so forth based on the fact that the nation was founded by Christians. And they go back to Christopher Columbus and they talk about Christopher Columbus as a who, you know, was on a mission from God.

And how the Holy Spirit spoke to him about the new world and, you know, all of these things. And then, of course, we know the actual history of Christopher Columbus. We know what happened when he got to what became the West Indies or to the Americas.

And we know the exploitation of the of the indigenous people and all of that under Columbus. All of those things are facts of history. And I think the stupidest thing anyone could ever do is say that Christopher Columbus was a Christian.

He came from a nation that was nominally Christian. But it wasn't Christian in the biblical sense. You see, that's the whole problem is calling something Christian that is not Christian.

What's Christian is what the Bible says. If it contradicts the Bible, it's not Christian. I don't care what it's called.

It doesn't matter at all. So if. The king and queen of Spain sent Columbus on a mission in the name of God to go discover these new worlds and so forth and to evangelize the people and so forth, all of it was done under something that was not Christian in the first place.

And all of this, again, is just to say how pathetic the history of the church has been. But. We do have to honestly make a distinction between the church and true Christianity because they're two separate things.

True Christianity is based on the Bible. And the Bible only. And anything that claims to be Christian and yet does not submit itself to the authority of the Bible entirely is not Christian at all, whatever it's called.

So it's again, it's all connected to the same the same thing. It's all connected to embracing the world and bringing worldly philosophy, whether it be on an intellectual level or whether it be in the realm of power, because that's in in a large sense, so much of the history of the of the church is is an issue of power. It's a it's a power struggle.

But yet you remember what Jesus said to his own apostles, he said. The rulers of the Gentiles, they lorded over them. That's the way they.

That's the way their whole system is set up. Those who are the important ones, they dominate and control everyone else. But didn't Jesus say it shall not be so among you? But whoever would be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all.

See, that's the Bible. That's the biblical view of leadership. And so when the church was dominating the world and the popes were controlling kings and large portions and all of this stuff, it's just it's rubbish.

It has nothing to do with Christianity. But unfortunately, it's been called Christianity. So, Paul, let's finish it up here.

He says, I do not write these things to shame you. But as my beloved children, I warn you, for though you might have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel.

Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. Paul said, I'm speaking to you as somebody who loves you, not somebody who wants to exploit you, so I'm telling you the truth. I begot you in the gospel.

My concern for you is a parental concern. There were others that wanted to exploit them, take advantage of them. Paul says you have 10,000 instructors in Christ.

I've begotten you through the gospel. For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church. Now, some are puffed up as though I were not coming to you.

But I will come to you shortly if the Lord wills, and I will know not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. And we could translate the word word here rhetoric. That's what he's talking about.

Some modern charismatics have used this to support their position against those who teach the Bible. That's quite a rending of the of the scripture out of its context for the kingdom of God is not in rhetoric. It's not it's not all of this articulation and all, but it's it's the power of God.

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of gentleness? So this ends the long. Argument that began back there in chapter one, verse 11, Paul brings now this this portion of his exhortation to them to a close, and he closes with letting them know that he's going to come to them and deal with these things personally. From this point on, he's going to go and deal with the other problems in the church, as I pointed out in the beginning, the Corinthian epistle is corrective largely.

It's a church filled with problems, which is actually good for us because it teaches us. How to live as Christians by showing us what they were doing wrong, and then Paul's correction of that.

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