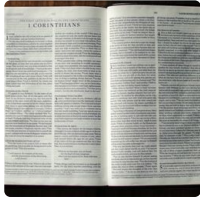


# OpenTheo

## 1 Corinthians 2:1-13



### 1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg covers 1 Corinthians 2, addressing themes of disunity, church leadership, and the importance of relying on the power of God over human wisdom. He emphasizes the need to understand spiritual truths and stresses the importance of personal encounters with God's power, which are immune to persuasive arguments against Christianity. Ultimately, Gregg argues that it is a personal experience of encountering the Holy Spirit and a loyal devotion to God that forms the foundation of the Christian faith.

### Transcript

We're turning now to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, and this is a wonderful chapter. 1 Corinthians has such great chapters in it. Of course, I guess I could say that about almost every book in the Bible.

It's just that each book has its own distinctiveness that, upon focusing on them, I'm reminded of the distinctive beauties of each chapter. This has been one of my favorite chapters in 1 Corinthians, and possibly in the Bible, at various times in my life. I like to read the whole chapter first, and then go back and talk about it verse by verse because of the need to take it as a unit, and even a little bit into chapter 3 as well, although I don't necessarily expect to comment on the verses in chapter 3 today.

We can save those for another session, but I'd like to at least read through chapter 3 verse 4 as part of the context of what we're reading here. 1 Corinthians 2 verse 1. And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling, and my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. However, we seek wisdom among those who are mature. Yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing, but we seek the

wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

But as it is written, I have not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, but God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the acroman does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. Chapter 3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnals, as to babes in Christ.

I fed you with milk, and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able, for you are still carnals. For where there is envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnals, and behaving like mere men? For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not carnals? Now, the reason I had to read those verses is because they really are necessary for understanding the whole flow of thought that begins in chapter 2. In chapter 1, Paul introduced a problem that he was aware of and needed to address, and that was a problem of disunity of sorts developing in Corinth. Exactly how far this denominational kind of division had progressed by the time Paul wrote this, we don't know.

Whether it was something people were beginning to talk about, or whether the church had actually divided into camps already, we cannot say. But Paul was aghast at it, and he talked about being of Paul, or of Apollos, or whatever, is missing the point entirely, and it's an abomination, it's actually dividing Christ up into pieces, because the body of Christ is the physical embodiment of Jesus, it is the body of Christ, the church is, on the earth. And it seems so, Paul could brook no divisions, could not tolerate any envy or strife or competitiveness between segments and sects of the body of Christ.

Now, for some reason in chapter 1, verse 17, Paul got into the fact that he was called to preach the gospel not with the wisdom of words, and went off into a bit of an excursus about human wisdom, and how that God has not chosen to use human wisdom as a means of men knowing him, but it was rather by revelation of his power in Christ, and

declaration of the simple gospel message that he intended to bring people to the knowledge of himself. Paul doesn't explain exactly why this is exactly, but I guess it's implied in the fact that he went on to say, near the end of chapter 1, that God has chosen foolish things and weak things to confound the wise and the strong, so that God alone might receive glory. I guess the way we could put those thoughts together is that if God had decided that human wisdom and philosophy and reasoning was going to be the means by which people could know him, then only those who were well-endowed intellectually would be able to know him ultimately and closely, and yet there are many people in the world who are pure in heart, but not intellectually superior, and such people would be omitted, would be left out from the deepest possible knowledge of God, if that knowledge was to be found through human logic and reasoning and so forth, which was simply what their mind was not fitted for, not equipped for, at the same level as others.

It's quite obvious that people who have high intellects also often have high egos, and that is something that God is not pleased to bless. Later on in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, he says that knowledge puffs people up. Knowledge tends, at least, to incite the spirit of pride and egotism, and yet in the Old Testament, God said that he draws near to the one who is of a humble and a contrite spirit, and who trembles in his words.

Therefore, human wisdom is not the means of access to the knowledge of God, at least not at the deepest, most intimate level. That is a matter that even simple people, even foolish and weak and inconsequential people have access to, and therefore God has determined that the knowledge of himself would be made known through the simplest means, by the declaration of a plain message that Jesus died for our sins and rose again according to the scriptures, that this message is accessible to all. It seems foolish to those who are looking for more sophisticated answers, it seems weak and a stumbling block to Jews who are looking for something more demonstrative of invisible power, signs, and wonders, and so forth, but it's the basic message that even the weak and the foolish can appreciate and can know God through, and God has chosen to allow such people to know him in greater numbers, because by doing so he chooses people who are not inclined to take credit or glory to themselves for what they accomplish in their Christian life.

They are foolish, they are weak people, therefore whatever is accomplished through them must be attributed not to their own strength, since they have none or little, but God will get the glory for it. Now, the reason that he brought up all these things is that we can deduce that the Corinthians, some of them, were quite enamored with humanism, and this is easy enough to understand when you figure that they were a Greek city not too far removed geographically from Athens, a center of commerce and therefore a place where philosophies from different parts of the world probably intermixed and were debated, and the Greek mind in general valued philosophy and wisdom of this sort, and no doubt the Christians did so as well. It's quite clear that the

cultural values of America have influenced the American church, much to its detriment in many cases, but this is something that I won't say is unavoidable, but is extremely common, for whatever the cultural values are of a region, they are often reflected in the church, at least insofar as the church remains carnal and worldly, to the extent that the church is transformed by the renewal of the mind to think more God's way, then of course the values of the church will not reflect as much the values of the worldly culture around them, but he says outright in verse 1 of chapter 3 that the Corinthians were carnal, and that they were not spiritual men, and it's quite clear that the values of their society were reflected in their own values in some cases.

Now, his reason for bringing this up might have something to do with his discussion of himself and Apollo. I mentioned this at the close of the last class, I didn't go into it in detail, and I probably won't go into it in great detail now either, but the point needs to be observed, that Paul got off onto this subject only after he had mentioned that there were some in the church, according to chapter 1 verse 12, who were saying, I'm of Paul, or I'm of Apollo. True, there were some saying I'm of Cephas, and I'm of Christ, and I don't know to what degree they had large representation in Corinth, but I'm of Paul and I'm of Apollo seem to be the two major camps, and I judge that based on, well, look at chapter 3 verse 4, the last verse we actually read when we read this passage, chapter 3 verse 4, he says, for when one says I'm of Paul and another I'm of Apollo, are you not carnal, he doesn't repeat that there are some saying Cephas and Christ, and then in verse 5, which we will not probably discuss today, but we'll save for another time, he says, who then is Paul and who is Apollo, and he begins to talk about a contractor and a comparison in the roles that he and Apollo have to each other, and in chapter 4 verse 6, after he's said a lot of things, which we'll be studying in the interim, he says in chapter 4 verse 6, now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollo, for your sakes, 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 another.

Now, again, it's Paul and Apollo that are the issue here. I suggested yesterday that Apollo's approach to ministry probably had a much more intellectual, rhetorical, debate kind of orientation than Paul's did. Not that Paul was incapable of it or had never used that same approach, he had used that same approach in various places previous to coming to Corinth.

My suggestion is, however, that he had such abysmal failure with this approach in Athens before coming to Corinth, and Athens, you know, the world hub of philosophy, where you would think that a philosophical approach would have the greatest impact and be most necessary, yet he had abysmal failure there, and I think that that caused him to rethink his approach to the Greek churches, or to the Greek cities, and when he came to Corinth, initially he reasoned as before in Athens, but eventually he just gave up that whole approach and just began to testify, which is a very different approach than reasoning and debating and so forth, he just began to testify. However, all we know

about Apollos from Acts, and there isn't too much on him in there, comes from the end of Acts chapter 18. Acts 18, verses 24 through 28, tells us this about the man Apollos, and this is all that Acts tells us about him.

He's only mentioned once in Acts, although he has been mentioned a few times in Corinthians. In Acts 18:24 it says, Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately, and when he desired to cross to Achaia, which is where Corinth was, they were in Ephesus when they encountered him here, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace. And then chapter 19 verse 1 of Acts says, And it happened while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus.

So we see that Apollos, after encountering Priscilla and Aquila, went over to Achaia and to Corinth. Now, we are told that he was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures, and a strong speaker, and so forth. I don't want to deduce more than the scripture would allow, but my guess is that when Apollos came to Corinth, he came with eloquence, with a powerful exhibition of the wisdom of words.

The very thing that Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:17, that he was not really convicted that he should resort to. In 1:17, he said, Christ did not send me to baptize or to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made known. In fact, it was at that point he went off into the discussion about the wisdom of the world and how the wisdom man didn't know God, and God has chosen the foolish things, and so forth.

Here in chapter 2, he emphasizes this again in chapter 2, verse 1, when I came to you I didn't come with this excellence of speech, and so forth. Now, I've never read any commentator who has said this, though some of them may have. I certainly haven't read every commentator around.

I've never heard any teacher teach this, and so it may not be the case. I may be alone in thinking this, but I've just gotten the impression from reading this that Paul may suddenly be drawing a contrast between himself and Apollos. He launched into this after mentioning Apollos in chapter 1, verse 12, and he returns to speaking about himself and Apollos in chapters 3 and 4. My thought is that in going off on this tangent, as it were, about human wisdom and how Paul didn't resort to that, and didn't depend on that, and didn't think it was a good policy depending on that, he doesn't come around and say, and that's what Apollos is doing, you know, and therefore I'm pursuing a better policy

than Apollos, and you shouldn't be of Apollos, you should do it my way.

He doesn't say anything like that because he doesn't want to cause division. He's friendly toward Apollos, and he wants people to continue to respect Apollos, but I have a feeling that Paul, in this discussion about human wisdom and so forth, is basically giving an apologetic for his approach, a polemic for the non-eloquent, non-academic, non-debate-oriented approach that he had chosen to use when he came to Corinth, which perhaps Apollos had used and had appealed to the Corinthian Christians on this basis. If you look at 1 Corinthians 16, you'll find that just before closing, Paul mentions Apollos again.

1 Corinthians 16, 12, Paul says, Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you. So, Apollos and Paul must have run into each other somewhere, where we do not know. Paul, since leaving Corinth, had been to Jerusalem and then to Ephesus, which is where he now was.

So, perhaps Apollos had returned to Ephesus after leaving for Philandicula there, or maybe he'd even gone to Jerusalem for the feast and encountered Paul there. It's hard to say. But, at some point, since Paul's departure from Corinth, he encountered Apollos, and he urged Apollos to come to Corinth.

Since, apparently, Paul couldn't do so at that time, and he felt like they needed the encouragement of a strong brother, Paul had some confidence in Apollos that he would be beneficial to the church there. But it says, But he was quite unwilling to come at this time. However, he will come when he has a convenient time.

Now, I don't want to read too much into this, but Paul didn't say Apollos had other pressing matters that prevented him. It says he was quite unwilling to come at this time. That leaves the question open of what? Was the guy not good? Didn't he care about the Corinthians? Was he on his own trip? Was he doing his own thing? I mean, why wasn't he submissive to the Apostle Paul, who had, you know, I mean, Apollos was conducting his labors in Paul's field, as it were, in Ephesus.

See, Apollos came to Ephesus after Paul had planted a church there. He came to Corinth after Paul had planted a church there. Apollos went around building on foundations that Paul had laid, and watering seeds that Paul had planted.

One would think that Apollos would be somewhat more submitted to Paul in these matters. Paul does not say anything directly negative about Apollos, but the way he states it to me, now, like I said, I don't want to read more than is there. It seems like he could have said, I really urged Apollos to come to you, but, you know, he just informed me there are a lot of other things that were taking his time right now, and it's not possible for him to do that, and so forth.

He said he was quite unwilling to come at this time. He was unwilling to do what I said. I asked him, I urged him to come, but he wasn't willing to do that.

But he'll come when he can. I don't know if I pick up a little tiny bit of a sense of Paul being a little peak at Apollos there, a little disappointed with Apollos, maybe. That he and Apollos, though they were partners in ministry at some level, were not exactly on the same wavelength.

Now, that is not really to speak evil either of Paul or Apollos. We know that that is true of Paul and Barnabas. We know that Paul and Barnabas had a different philosophy from each other about members of the team who had defected and wanted to rejoin the team.

We know that because of John Mark's situation. Barnabas and Paul had a serious conflict over that matter, and never, as far as we know, reached an agreement between themselves on it. We also know that Peter and Paul had differences of opinion from time to time, that they flashed in each other's presence about only once that we know of, but we don't know it to be the only case.

So, to suggest that Paul and Apollos, though wishing to remain cordial toward each other and being co-laborers, might have had some points at which they found each other disappointing, or maybe even irritating, I don't know. I don't know if that is going too far. But I will say this, that Paul never takes any overt swipes at Apollos.

He never tries to belittle him, he never tries to criticize him. And notice, by the way, what we just read in 1 Corinthians 16, 12, about, I urged him strongly to come, but he wasn't willing to come at this time. How little Paul seems to be into an authoritarianism, such as we have sometimes encountered in groups that are getting to shepherding.

There are churches that get into a shepherding movement which indicate that you cannot be submissive to God without being submissive to your overseers at the same level as you would be to God. I mean, I don't know if you've encountered that before. I have.

It's an actual movement, usually referred to as the discipleship or shepherding movement. But on this view, if Paul held the shepherding view, he should have warned these people that Apollos was a rebel, because here the apostle to the Gentiles, the one whose field it was that Apollos was working in, he had urged, he hadn't just requested, he strongly urged Apollos to go, and Apollos said, sorry, I've got other plans. I mean, if that was considered to be rebellion against God, that he didn't submit to an apostle in this matter, we have no reason to believe that Apollos was regarded as an apostle, but probably in advance here.

Then Paul should have said something. Some word of warning. This guy's dangerous.

This guy's a renegade. He's a lone ranger. He's got a Jezebel spirit.

He just won't submit. But Paul didn't say any of those things about him. Paul is not an authoritarian kind of leader, though he probably, arguably, packed more actual authority from God in the early church than almost anyone else, in the Gentile world at least.

In the Gentile churches, Paul was God's apostle to the Gentiles. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 1, if you would. We get another picture of how undemanding Paul was, how unwilling to pull rank and shove his authority around the people.

In 2 Corinthians 1, 24, Paul says, not that we have dominion over your faith, but our fellow workers, King James's helpers, for your joy, for by faith you stand. Paul did not see himself, though he was their spiritual father, though he was an apostle, and they were not, he did not see himself as one having dominion over them. Why would this be? Well, because Paul wanted to be like Jesus.

Now, Jesus does have dominion over us, and rightfully so. He's the Lord. But no Christian worker is the Lord.

Only Jesus is, and therefore we can't wield the same authority over people that Jesus did. In fact, years ago I read a book by one Carlos Ortiz called Disciple, which has many good things about it to commend it, in my opinion. But one thing where I disagreed was, Jesus would walk up to the fishermen and say, follow me.

And they left everything and followed him. And he'd walk up to Matthew, the tax collector, and say, follow me. And he'd leave everything and follow him.

And he said, Jesus didn't request it, he gave orders that people followed. And then this author tried to, he was a leader in the shepherding movement, this author went on to say, this is how pastors should be, that they shouldn't have to be begging with cap and hand asking people to do things, they should just, they're in authority, like Jesus, they should say, do it, and people should do it. I disagreed with that assumption, and I think it's a false analogy.

While it is true that leaders should resemble Jesus as much as possible, there's one area where there is no resemblance, or at least there's no parallel, and that is that Jesus is the Lord, and Christian leaders are distinctly commanded by Christ not to lord it over other people. I'm looking for the place where Jesus said that in chapter 22, or chapter 20 of Matthew, I believe it is. Verse 25, Matthew 20 and verse 25, this is when John and James sent their mother to try to appeal to Jesus to give them special honors in the kingdom, special places of authority, and Jesus called them to himself, Matthew 20 and 25, Jesus called them to himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you, let



him be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. He says the rulers of the Gentiles have an entirely different approach to authority and leadership than I will allow to exist among you. They exercise authority over people.

They lord it over people. Now, for many years I tried not to see this verse as the way it really reads. I felt like it couldn't mean what it says.

I mean, I knew that people shouldn't lord it over other people. I was sure of that, but I felt like lording it over people is being very authoritarian, being authoritarian in the sense that you demand people practically to lick your boots or something, and if they don't do what you say, then you just fellowship them or something. That's what I thought lording it over would be.

But the second part of this statement is that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise authority over them, and that seems legitimate enough. How could anyone not a person in authority seemingly must exercise authority? But Jesus said it shall not be so among you, and it challenged at the very core my understanding of church leadership in general. I felt like a church leader should not be authoritarian and abusive and so forth, and demanding, but I did feel that they were to exercise authority of some kind.

But Jesus says that's what Gentile rulers do, and really, he said the leadership of the church is serving. It's serving. I really think this challenges our whole concept of church structure today.

I'm not sure that I have a final word on it. I'm just saying it challenges it. You can think it through for yourself, and I'm still thinking it through myself.

But the whole idea of the elders of the church having an office that is like, in our thinking, like the board of directors of the corporation. Now, it's almost a universal phenomenon in the churches that even if they have godly and humble elders, and many churches do, mature, humble guys, who are probably very qualified to be elders, yet the mindset is, not necessarily just of them, but of the whole church world, is that these elders hold an office that is like the board of directors of the corporation, and the pastor is sort of like the chairman of the board, or the CEO, or the president of the corporation, or something like that. And yet, I guess I'd have to ask, how is this, then, any different than how the corporations of the Gentiles are set up? The rulers of the Gentiles do it that way.

They make and enforce the policies and rules and so forth. And I'm wondering if in the days of the apostles, there was an entirely different mindset, which was governed by what Jesus said, which, although there were people who were recognized as elders, and they really did provide leadership in the church, I wonder if they had anything like the

political authority in the church, that we now take for granted among elders and leaders in the church. I mean, we take it for granted because that's what the world has.

That's a worldly norm. People who are leaders exercise authority. They make policies and enforce them, and so forth.

And I wonder, I mean, I'm just putting this out as something I wonder about, and it's certainly something I've been thinking about lately. Whether in the early church it was just understood, yeah, these guys are elders. That means they are spiritual servants of the church.

They provide a service, and people recognize that service and use their service. If they are teaching elders, then people use their service of teaching. They teach, but they don't exercise authority over people.

They just serve. They serve out the food, as it were, the spiritual food. If their service is in administration, then they do that to the best of their ability, but without the political assumptions that usually attend the office of elder or church trustee or whatever.

Of course, the big question is, how does it work? How would it work to have guys who are elders and don't really have authority that's like a political kind of authority, just spiritual? Well, it would put submission on an entirely voluntary basis. The only thing biblically I could see that would, where an eldership should step in and do something against the will of a party in the church is when they have to discipline sin or heresy in the church, because that is the service they perform. The service they are called to do is to watch the flock, keep the wolves out, and so forth.

And I think that it is the duty of elders to stand up and warn the flock and say, this person here, we've faced him several times on his sin, he's rebellious, he refuses to repent, therefore we warn you not to have company with him, as Paul said to do. But most churches and Christian organizations, including this one, are run, in some measure, modeled after a corporation, a worldly corporation. And I wonder to what degree that is out of harmony with the teaching of Jesus, that that's what the rulers of the Gentiles do, they exercise authority over people.

The first and foremost, the leaders in the body of Christ are to be people who are just servants. I think of Paul in this connection, this is how we got off on the subject, because Paul, there's a sense in which he appears to exercise authority, he commands people to put this guy out of the church and so forth, but I don't think that he saw himself as having anything like a political authority. It was more like he expected them to reverence the word of God that was coming through him.

He had an anointing to speak to them, the word of God, and they were to be submitted to God. And they were to submit to Jesus Christ. And his ministry happened to be to tell

them what Jesus said, and to disciple them in that.

So there were times when he had to rebuke them for misbehavior of various kinds. But his actual means of exercising authority seems to be very non-authoritarian, at least as we see him toward Apollos. And even, as I pointed out a moment ago in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, where he says, we don't have dominion over you, that's not our role, we're just helpers, we're co-workers, fellow workers with you to help you along in your way.

We're here to serve. We're not here to exercise dominion and authority over you. If you look over at 1 Peter chapter 5, the whole hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic institution is based on the assumption that the Pope is the spiritual successor to Peter, and that the authority of the Pope is like that of Peter.

And yet, look at Peter's own opinion of his own authority, and of the authority of bishops and elders, and so forth. In 1 Peter 5, verse 1, says the elders, which is a synonym in the Bible for bishops, who are among you, I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also the partaker of the glory that will be revealed, shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock, and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. I don't really think there was anything like a political kind of pecking order in the church.

If anything, Peter would seem to have more authority than Paul, and yet Paul felt quite comfortable rebuking Peter, in Galatians chapter 2 we read of it, and Peter apparently received the rebuke humbly. Apollos did not follow Paul's instructions. When Paul urged him to go to Corinth, Paul just didn't want to do that.

He had other things he wanted to do, and Paul did not criticize him for that. He didn't say, this man has reneged on his obligation to submit to me a superior apostle to himself. Paul did not consider his authority as anything that had political teeth.

It was a spiritual thing, and spiritual men would honor it. At whatever level they wished, in the spirit, as they were led of God. Paul said later on in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, the head of every man is Christ.

Not the head of every man is the elders of the church or an apostle like himself. In chapter 11 verse 3 of 1 Corinthians he says, I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.

So that Christ submits to his father, and every man submits to Christ. Paul did not know of any political arrangement that was valid in the church that allowed some man to stand as an intermediary, as authority, between another man and Christ. Every man, like a body, answers to his head.

Elsewhere Paul said to Timothy, there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. So any form of interpretation of church structure and government that replaces the believer's direct answerableness to Christ with some intermediary who is in charge of their life in some measure that prevents them from doing just what Jesus tells them to do. Although almost every church I know of in some level accepts this as an assumption that the leaders of the church are leaders, authorities that exercise authority over the church, it seems to me to be in violation of the principle that is enunciated everywhere in the New Testament.

That leaders are servants. And that doesn't just mean that they are authoritarian people who have a servant attitude. It means that leadership is itself a service that is provided, not imposed.

And that is the difference, I think, between the rulers of the Gentiles and the leaders of the church as they should be. Namely, that authority in Gentile institutions is imposed, and of necessity it must be. But in the church it is voluntary.

Every man is answerable to Christ, and because he is, he eagerly wishes to submit to anyone who speaks the word of Christ to him, insofar as they do so. And that person needn't hold any political office in an organization or church or whatever. Anyway, this is a little off the subject perhaps, but not entirely, because what got us off on this is this discussion of the relationship of Paul and Apollos.

It seems to me that Paul is a little disappointed with Apollos. Again, I hope I'm not reading more in there than I am, and I don't want to give you the impression that it's a clear-cut thing, and you must necessarily believe this, but it's just kind of a subjective feeling I get from the way Paul talks here, that he's a little disappointed with Apollos. Here Paul came in and planted a church on his own principles and policies, and Apollos comes in with a different way of doing things, and some of the people who once liked money with Paul are now thinking, well, Paul doesn't really have it together.

This guy's a lot classier, this guy's a lot more eloquent, this guy's a lot more philosophically astute, and now the church is starting to be divided. Not that Apollos ever intentionally intended to divide the church. If Apollos intended to do that, I'm sure Paul would have come right out and warned the church against him as a divisive person.

I think it was unintentional. It's just that different ministers have different strengths in different areas of life, which attract a different kind of personality to themselves, and this, entirely innocently on their part, can be an occasion for divisions in the church if the Christians are responding to this difference in the different ministers in a carnal way. And that's what Paul is saying is the problem here in Corinth.

There should be no problem with there being a different approach on Paul's part from that of Apollos. The church should appreciate both. They shouldn't say, well, we're going

to follow Paul and we're going to exclude you people who like Apollos and the other guys say the opposite.

That is a carnal reaction. As long as some are saying, I'm of Paul and others say I'm of Apollos, they're showing themselves to be babes in carnal, he says in chapter 3 verses 1-4. Now, I believe that chapter 2 is an extended rebuke of this very carnality, of this divisiveness that they have, which is not a necessary result of the different approaches that Paul and Apollos have.

It is not necessary that the church must divide simply because these two leaders are different in the way they do things. And later on he says to them, all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or whatever, all things are yours. And he considers that they should revel in having a variety of teachers and a variety of approaches, but that's not the way they've reacted.

They're looking for a human leader so that they can carnally associate themselves with a movement under a visible leader, a human leader, and he says that's a worldly attitude, a carnal attitude, and an immature one. When you get spiritual and mature, you don't interpret your identity in terms of loyalty to individuals, human beings. Well, to make this point, and he does so, as I say, in a protracted way in chapter 2, he begins by reminding them of his own approach.

Now, he said in chapter 117 that he was not called to preach the gospel in the wisdom of words. He goes into an illustration of this from how they remember, or they should remember, how he came to them in the first place. He says, I, brethren, when I came to you did not come with excellence of speech or wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

He says, for I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, so that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Now, many churches have felt like this approach that Paul had to Corinth is the way that they should teach their congregations all the time. That is, to determine to know nothing and preach nothing except Christ and him crucified. I was raised in a church like this.

It was a church that wanted to be loyal to the gospel, wanted to be good and scriptural. And they said, well, Paul determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, therefore that's what we want. I've been in churches where they hang a banner over the platform that says, we preach nothing but Christ and him crucified.

Which sounds very commendable, since they have this verse apparently in their favor.

But one thing we should notice, Paul said that was his approach to the Corinthians. But notice in verse 6, which we're not done talking about verses 1-5, but look at verse 6, it says, However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature.

Now, there's a contrast here. In verses 1-5, he talks about the approach he made to the Corinthians when he came to them. But in verse 6, he says, there are others who are mature.

And we take, in some respects, a different approach in dealing with them. He says, when I came to you, I didn't come with wisdom, but we do preach wisdom to those who are mature. Now, it's quite clear that Paul is telling them that they are not mature, and were not when he was with them.

He certainly says that in chapter 3, verse 1, And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as unto carnal, as babes in Christ. Even though he spent 18 months with them, they never got beyond the baby point. They never really outgrew their carnality.

They remained immature the entire 18 months he spent in Corinth, and he indicates in verse 2 of chapter 3, they're still in that condition. Even though he'd been gone for a while, and they'd had the benefit of the ministry of Apollos and others. He says in verse 2 of chapter 3, I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it.

And even now, you're still not able. And he indicates that the proof of this is that they were still showing the signs of carnality in dividing and being loyal to this teacher, or that teacher, this leader, that leader, and so forth, which he says is proof that you are carnal. Now, he mentions there, and I'm working with the first five verses of chapter 2 and the first four verses of chapter 3 together, because both passages are, he's going back and saying, when I was with you, this is what I did.

And so by taking those two passages together, we get a full picture of how he views, and how he is revealing what his approach, his deliberate approach was among the Corinthians. When he was with them, he perceived that he was not with spiritual people. He was not with mature people.

The approach he took was an approach he would have to take to carnal, immature people. It is to them that he says, I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus and him crucified. That's what he says in chapter 2, verse 2. But he also says in chapter 3, verse 2, I fed you only with milk and not with solid food.

Now, if a church would hang a banner over their platform that says, we teach nothing but Jesus and him crucified, they might as well put in parentheses, in other words, we preach only milk here. Because Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2, 6, but to the mature, we do

more than that. To mature people, we have more to say than just the basic gospel message.

And one of the weaknesses of the church I was raised in, in my opinion, was that we who were already converted, simply heard the gospel preached week after week after week, and never were disciples. We were never taught anything more than Jesus and him crucified, which is a wonderful message to have taught to you, especially if you don't know it yet. And even if you do know it, there are aspects of that message, the example of Christ, the doctrine of the cross, and so forth, that even young Christians need to be taught and need to get under their belt before they can go on to things more meaty than that, more solid food than that.

Nonetheless, Paul did make a distinction in these chapters. In chapter 3, he said, I taught you with milk, I couldn't give you solid food. This is because you were carnal and immature.

In chapter 2, he said, I taught you differently than I would teach mature people. And so, chapter 2, verses 1 through 5, he's telling them about how he treated them like babes. I didn't come with wisdom.

I didn't give you much beyond just the basic elements of the gospel itself. You weren't really ready for more. Just for a moment, turn over to Hebrews chapter 5. We don't know who wrote Hebrews.

Many Christians have felt, traditionally, that Paul wrote it. That opinion is not in vogue these days, and almost no commentator seems to want to stand by the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. There are many, in my opinion, many evidences that Paul did write it.

And while no one can be sure, since the book is written anonymously, and does not claim any particular person as its author, my opinion is, secretly, don't tell anyone, that Paul probably did write it, or at least somebody very, very much under Paul's influence wrote it. Because whoever wrote it talked a lot like Paul. There are certain Paulinisms or expressions that are found only in Paul elsewhere, and are found now in Hebrews as well.

This is an instance of that. In Hebrews chapter 5, verse 12, the writer says, for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Now, here the writer makes

the same distinction that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 3, verses 1-4. That is, there is a difference between what he calls milk and what he calls solid food.

Of course, both, milk and solid food, have to do with theology, doctrines, teachings. And some are fitted for babes in Christ, others are fitted for more mature in Christ. The complaint of the writer of Hebrews is that his readers have been Christians long enough that one would expect them to have a degree of maturity which they do not possess yet.

Inexplicably, they have never really grown up. And while they are old enough chronologically in the faith that they should be able to be teachers, yet they are still quite incapable of being teachers, and still dependent on being spoon-fed the basic first principles. Their growth has been stunted, and regardless of their age, they are still babes.

Timmy says that solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, who are mature in other words, that is, those who by reason of use, meaning they have put to use the word that they have heard preached, and they have applied it and used it in their life, they have developed or exercised their spiritual senses so that they are now able to discern things. They are able to make judgments. Remember I told you yesterday that Paul in 1 Corinthians is continually urging these people to grow up and make judgments.

The spiritual man judges all things, it says in 1 Corinthians 2.15. Discerning and judging are the same thing. He says mature people are those who have used the word of God as presented to them, the milk that they have been fed, they have put it to use, they have developed spiritual senses of discernment, and now they can be entrusted with deeper, more solid kinds of things that a babe would choke on. Now, Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 3 about the Corinthians.

They are babes, he could only feed them with milk, he couldn't give them solid food. He says even now they are not able to endure the solid food. Now, bearing that in mind, in chapter 2, verses 1-5, we see Paul telling them what he did when he was with them.

We know from this other passage in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians that what he did was treat them like babies. What he did was not treat them the way he treats spiritual or mature people. Even though he was with them for 18 months, and that is quite a long enough time for some of them, when you would think to grow up, apparently they never did.

And so, in his entire dealings with them, he avoided getting very far beyond just establishing the basic gospel message, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He says, I didn't come with excellence of speech and wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. I determined, this was his determination among them, not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and crucified.



Now, in verse 3, chapter 2, he says, I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. Now, we don't know why this is, but we might be able to deduce that this was a result of his lack of success in Athens just before coming to Corinth. We do not see Paul in the book of Acts as a man who emanates fear, who emanates intimidation, that he is intimidated by the crowd or whatever.

I mean, in most places, Paul just goes and boldly preaches in the synagogues, gets thrown out of their steps with dust off his feet, and says, well, we're going to go to the Gentiles then. And then he goes and preaches publicly and debates in the marketplaces. This is what we see Paul generally doing when he comes to town.

But he came to Corinth in an entirely, seemingly more chastened, more humbled, more unself-confident attitude. In fear, in much trembling, he came to Corinth. And he gives no explanation of why that was.

It may have been, however, because he was beginning to think he needs to rethink his whole approach to the Greeks. Having argued philosophically with the Greeks in Athens just before coming to Corinth, and not finding the fruit in that approach that he expected, he may have felt like, wow, I've got to go back to square one with these people, I don't even know what to... I guess I'll just testify, I guess I'll just tell them the gospel, even though they are Greeks and it'll seem like foolishness to them, I'll just have to do it, and just have to trust in the demonstration of the power of God to make it convincing. And this can be intimidating, and I know this particularly as a teacher.

More and more, as I get older, I have to guard against the desire to be viewed as a sophisticated theologian. I don't want to be a sophisticated theologian, I just want to understand the Bible and be like a child. The more I read, and the more I really grasp certain issues, and so forth, especially the more I read theologians.

And now, as I'm even doing some writing, the more the temptation is to write in a way that would be respectable. If any of these theologians are younger or aspiring theologians, how about they view me as a theologian. I really don't want that.

That's not the image I want. And it's something that I just have to guard against. I mean, everyone has their things they have to guard against.

One thing I have to guard against is the pride of trying to present myself as one who's well-versed in everything on a subject, and so forth. Because that's what theologians do, that's what scholars do. And as I say, being a scholar is not exactly my goal, not in the sense that we usually think of that word.

I do want to understand, and I want to be well-versed, I want to be well-acquainted for my own benefit of my own understanding. But once you begin to make some progress in that area, of course, the devil whispers in your ear, you know, you ought to get some

credit for how much you know, and what a shame if people wouldn't appreciate how much you know about this particular subject or something. So that, if I were to make a determined effort to say, OK, I'm not going to show people as much as I know on this subject.

I'm not going to show them how well I can debate this point. I'm going to just declare it. I'm just going to present it.

I'm just going to say it, and then move on from there. That might be the right approach in many circumstances. It depends on how much I'm trying to train theologians and how much I'm trying to just say something and get it across to people.

But I certainly know the temptation, and Paul was capable of talking about very deep things. In 2 Corinthians, he says that he had been caught up in the third heaven. He didn't actually say he had been, but most people understand his statement to mean that.

In the third heaven, he heard things that were so profound that they were unlawful even to be uttered. He knew things he wasn't at liberty to repeat. That's frustrating to a teacher, to know exciting things that you've had revealed to you and not be at liberty to repeat them to anyone.

For one thing, a teacher is motivated by desire to communicate everything he knows. In most respects, I hope that's a pure desire. That's his motivation as a teacher.

He wants everyone to know what he knows. He wants to let them know. But then there's also that carnal thing in there that can say, not only do I want them to know what I know, I want them to know that I know it.

I want them to appreciate the fact that I know these things. And how hard it must have been for Paul to know things that were unlawful for him to utter. And for him to be privy to these great mysteries, but he just wasn't at liberty to say them.

He couldn't just let everyone know how brilliant he was or how many things he knew. And when it came to Corinth, it must have been very awkward for him. It must have been a real adjustment for him to just restrain his speech to the simple message of the gospel when he had just been debating with philosophers in Athens on the streets and in the synagogue a few days earlier.

And now he's just going to come off like a fool for Christ. He's just going to say a message which he knows will seem foolish to the Greeks. He's going to resist the temptation to debate it.

He's going to resist the temptation to come off with eloquence, which he was no doubt fully in command of, which he could have done. And no doubt this is part of the reason that he was so much in fear and trembling. This was to be determined not to show

people how much you know when you've maybe in many places depended a great deal on what you know and how well you can argue it.

And even on people accepting your point because they can see and have seen how much you know about the subject, to just say I'm going to persuade all use of that approach at all, and with these people I'm just going to proclaim a message I know can be foolish to them. I may look like an idiot, but that's what I'm going to do. I could imagine a minister trying that new policy with a bit of trepidation, a little bit of fear and trembling.

I don't know if that's why Paul was in fear and trembling. There doesn't seem to be any obvious reason why he should have had more fear and trembling going into Corinth than he did elsewhere. Now there was persecution he encountered.

He did experience resistance in Corinth, but that was not unusual. For example, in 1 Thessalonians, he tells them that although when he came to them he had just come from Philippi, and he had been beaten and put in prison in Philippi, and greatly abused, he and Silas, yet when they came to Thessalonica, he says, none of us had a great boldness of speech. Remember that? In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, let me find it.

This shows that just because a guy could anticipate some persecution doesn't mean that Paul would come in fear and trembling, because he wasn't a coward. In 1 Thessalonians 2, he said in verse 1, For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. Now, we just come from an abusive situation.

When you've been hurt bad in one place, you sometimes go to the next place with your guard up. People like that when they change churches sometimes. I've known people, they get hurt in church, they get mistreated, and then if they even take the risk of joining another church, or going to another church, they do so with great intimidation that they're afraid if they get too vulnerable.

Perhaps they'll get hurt again, and they don't want that. And having been abused in one place makes them less capable of being bold and confident in a new place. And Paul was not generally affected that way.

Even though he was abused in Philippi, it didn't cause him to come to Thessalonica in fear and trembling. He came with great boldness. Yet, when he came to Corinth, it was different.

There was no obvious threat of persecution at Corinth that was greater than what Paul had experienced in all the other places he'd been. I think the fear and trembling was based on the fact that he felt convinced in his heart to take an approach to ministry that

was different than what he'd done before, that was an untested thing for him. He was not going to be able to depend on the arm of flesh at all, on his fleshly wisdom or his fleshly debate skills.

He was going to just leave things in the hands of God and let God confirm the word through signs following or whatever. And this, in a Greek city where he knew wisdom was greatly extolled and where his message, if it seemed foolish to the Greeks, it would make him look like a fool. And it's hard to bear a reputation that you know you could dispel if you just showed what, you know, if you strut your stuff a little more.

If you could just put on display what you can do and you know that everyone who's mocking you now would be in awe. You know, but you decide not to do that. It's like Jesus hanging on the cross and they're saying to him, If you're really the son of God, come down from there, prove you can do it, you know.

I mean, that must have been such a temptation to Jesus, knowing that he could do just that if he wanted to. But he decided not to strut his stuff on that occasion. He decided not to call twelve legions of angels.

He decided to go ahead and forswear that approach and allow himself to die in humiliation. And that is what the cross, you know, one of the things the cross suggests is humiliation in the sight of men. And I think that maybe that's why Paul was coming with this bit of fear and trembling and a weakness.

His weakness was not that he was really intellectually weak, but that he had chosen to take an approach that would appear weak to others in that respect. And he said that, you know, his speech and his preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom. But it was accompanied in the demonstration of the spirit and of power.

Now, I believe that Paul probably did miracles in most places that he went. We read of special miracles done by Paul in Ephesus, for example, in Acts chapter 19. It says special miracles were done by Paul.

When he was at Lystra, he healed a lame man. When he was on the island of Cyprus, he struck a false prophet with blindness. On the island of Malta, he survived a deadly snake bite and healed the father of the chief man of the island.

Paul's ministry in many places was characterized by the supernatural. But we do not read of it happening all the time. I mean, in the book of Acts, we don't read specifically of miracles being done by Paul every place he went.

He may have done it, and it may not have been recorded all the time. But Paul does mention that when he came to Corinth, he was going to depend on the miraculous confirmation of the Holy Spirit in a way, for example, that we do not read of him doing in Athens. In Athens, we do not read of him doing any supernatural deeds.

He just debated in the streets and then on Mars Hill. We don't read of any demonstration of the spirit and of power in his ministry, in the form of signs and wonders, in Athens. But he decided, in coming to Corinth, that he was going to entirely depend on that.

He was going to make the proclamation and expect God, through the Holy Spirit, to confirm the word through signs following. And sure enough, God did. Because, as we saw yesterday, in 2 Corinthians 12, he said, Surely the signs of the apostle were brought among you with all perseverance and signs and wonders and mighty deeds, reminding them of the fact that there were, in fact, these signs to confirm his word.

Now, he chose to do it that way. He says in chapter 2, verse 5, That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The Greeks, I'm sure, were particularly susceptible to this.

They loved to get together and just debate contrary philosophies. Sometimes, philosophies that didn't amount to a whole hill of beans, you know. But it was, nonetheless, an intellectual exercise.

It was a form of entertainment. We read that on Mars Hill, the philosophers used to gather just to hear or to say some new thing. It didn't matter if it was more true or less true than some other thing they already heard.

It was just to hear something new. Just to stimulate their minds and so forth. Philosophy was a form of recreation for the Greeks.

And they would be inclined, if Paul came with persuasive arguments, and if they found them persuasive, they said, OK, this sounds good, we'll go ahead and be Christians now, because Paul had a good argument here. Paul knew that a devotion to philosophy, a devotion to human wisdom, is a fickle thing. If you become a Christian because you've been convinced that that's an intelligent, philosophically sophisticated thing to be, a Christian, it's not going to be long before someone comes along and presents an argument that sounds equally or more sophisticated against being a Christian, in favor of some other thing.

Now, my view is, of course, that Christianity does have the best arguments because it's true. And there will never be any alternative view that really has truer and better arguments in its favor. But that being so, notwithstanding, many times we don't have all the truth, all the evidence, we don't know all the arguments, they don't all come to mind, and for the time being, a Jehovah's Witness at the door, or an atheist, or someone who's got some position other than the biblical position on things, may have an argument that sounds unassailable.

And if your faith is resting on the fact that someone made what sounded to you an unarguable argument, philosophically and intellectually, for Christianity, and that's why

you became a Christian, then when someone comes along with an equally good-sounding or better-sounding argument on the same basis of a contrary philosophy, you're not going to have any good reason to stick with Christianity. You'll have no loyalty to it because your faith is not resting in a powerful, life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit. But on simply having given mental assent to a set of arguments that made sense to you.

But, like I say, that's a fickle thing. Because arguments for Christianity might sound very convincing today, and arguments against Christianity might sound very convincing in another setting, coming from another party. And a person, in order to have a faith that is settled on a foundation that is immovable, must have it founded not so much on an intellectual assent, but on a personal experience of the power of God in their life.

Someone was asking me, what was it recently? I can't remember who I was talking to. I don't think it was here in class. I'm pretty sure it was in a private discussion with someone not very long ago, like yesterday or the day before, about how I felt I should go about preparing my children to be faithful unto death.

Because that, in my opinion, is the task of any parent. More than any other thing. The task of the parent is not to prepare the children to be financial successes, although it doesn't hurt to teach them job skills that will help them support themselves, but that's not the principal task.

The principal task is to make sure that your kids are saved and die saved. And that they die saved even if their death is preceded by torture and testing of the most extreme kind. And that your children will endure to the end.

I think that's how I understand the task of a parent, and that's my philosophy of child raising. If I teach them nothing else, if they never become eminent in mathematics or in social studies or in science, it makes no difference to me. I don't care.

I mean, if they do, that's fine. If they don't, that's fine, too. What matters to me is that they're eminently loyal to God.

And I can only expect that if they are 100% convinced of their Christian faith. And I've given a lot of thought to that. How do I want to prepare my children to be 100% convinced in a world which, after I'm gone, and not there to help answer their questions and so forth, may not afford them a lot of encouragement to their faith? And the answer I've come up with, at least tentatively, what I believe is, first of all, I do want them to be acquainted with the basic apologetic issues.

I don't want their faith, however, to rest in those. I want them to know that philosophic arguments and scientific arguments are favorable towards the view that they hold and that they're not believing something that has been disproven by every other field. You

know, I mean, I don't want them to think they're holding to something that is stupid and wrong.

I want them to know that the faith that we believe is credible. Regardless of what arguments have brought us against it, it has credibility. And I want them to be acquainted with the basic apologetic arguments for Christianity.

But more than that, I want them to know God personally in a way where they can, at times where arguments against Christianity seem unassailable, that they will nonetheless say, but I know God. I've encountered God. My prayers have been answered on these many occasions.

You know, I've seen the power of God. I've known the power of God. Not just the feeling of God.

You see, this is an important thing to me. A lot of people would say, well, I could never defect from Christ, even if I don't know any arguments in favor of Christianity, just because I know God in my heart. I have this feeling of God in my heart.

But feelings are fickle things, too. When you're rotting in a prison cell and there's not an awful lot of emotional gratification happening there, and you're wondering, you know, where is God now? Like the soul is often wondered, God, why do you hide yourself? Where are you? When you're in that condition, you don't have all the same emotional gratification and confirmation of your faith. And yet, the arguments for Christianity are temporarily elusive, you know, at those times.

Like, now why do I believe Christianity is true again? You know, I mean, what do you got? What do you got to fall back on? You shouldn't have an objective experience with God. There's not just a subjective feeling of goosebumps that you get when you hear the name of Jesus, but that is objective. You have seen the power of God.

The demonstration of the Spirit in power. Now, I would take this to be in the realm of having been healed, having had prayers answered, having received deliverance from life-dominating sinful patterns and things like that. Things where the real power of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated unanswerably.

I mean, where no one can say, well, you just deluded yourself about that. But where there is very clear manifestation of God's power at work in their life. I want my kids to have that.

I want them to have experiences with God. I want them to know how to argue their faith intellectually, but I don't want their faith to rest in that. There was a young Christian, I don't know if I told you this before, if I did it wasn't very recently, but there was a young Christian girl in Santa Cruz when I lived there who went to our school, our summer discipleship program, and she stayed in town and she was serving God powerfully.

And then she came into a circle of people who had a very bad theology. I won't identify what the theology was, but they were a Christian group. They had a very bad theology and, in my opinion, a very misinformed view of the character of God.

And one of the guys in the circle gave her a book that argued for this theology that they held. And I was concerned about her remaining steadfast in the truth. And after she read the book, I asked her, I said, well, what was your impression of that book? I didn't approve of the book, but I wasn't going to tell her what she had to believe.

I was praying and trusting that she wouldn't be led astray by it. I said, well, what did you think about that book? She said, well, the book made sense. They made some pretty good arguments for the position.

She said, the impression I just had of how it was written is that that's not the God I know. The God that they're describing in this book isn't the God that I know. And I was so relieved, really, because this girl really did know God.

I mean, I know she did, and she was rendered, by her personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit in her life, she was rendered immune from the deception that comes through arguments alone. But you are not immune from that deception that comes from argument alone if your faith is based on argument alone. If you become a Christian because someone convinced you through human and worldly wisdom that Christianity just makes more sense than anything else, and if that's all there is, then you can be as quickly led astray by arguments that sound convincing.

Now, of course, it's possible that some of you could say, well, I did become a Christian partly because of arguments. Maybe almost entirely because of arguments I heard that convinced me that Christianity was true. I believe that those arguments can play an important role.

But the essential thing is that you are convicted of your sin and determined that you need Christ and that he is Lord and that you have an encounter with him, which is really a power encounter. I realize that John Wimbert or some others might use the expression power encounter to speak of where there's actually a miracle performed through confirming the Word. But as far as I'm concerned, regeneration is a tremendous miracle.

If a person who is totally selfish, totally sinful and bonded to sinful habits, they get radically blasted out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God and their lives are now devoted to holiness and godliness, that is miracle enough. I'm not saying I wouldn't enjoy seeing other miracles too. Other miracles are good too, but there's none greater than that one.

And unless a person has had that encounter with the Spirit and the power of God transforming them, taking out that heart of stone and putting in a heart of flesh,



reorienting their whole consciousness because they have a new birth, they're a new creation. That is a demonstration of the Spirit and their power. Although Paul had, of course, additional demonstrations, no doubt, in the miraculous, probably mostly in healings and in casting out demons.

And I certainly believe in those things too. But I would hope that my children and anyone that I have the power to influence in this way would have an appreciation for their wisdom of arguments, for the apologetic issues, and an ability to defend the faith when it is challenged by an invalid argument against it. But I would not wish for their faith to rest in that, but to rest in the fact that they've had an encounter with the power of God and that they have objective evidence of God in the supernatural sense of knowing that they've had prayers answered, having seen a supernatural change in their own lives, and so forth.

I think that's what Paul is saying that he was counting on with the Corinthians. Now, in saying all of that, he doesn't want to give them the impression that being intelligent is out of place. Christianity is not a society where people coming in are required to check their brains at the door and just believe a thousand incredible things before breakfast every morning, you know.

Christianity is a sensible religion, and there are deep things about it. While Paul may not have shared those deep things with the Corinthians, it was only because he judged that they were not capable of digesting them. They were babes and they were carnal.

But he tells them in verse 6, However, we do speak wisdom among those who are mature. That, of course, is a category that Paul did not place the Corinthians in. Mature.

They were not mature. So, what he's telling them there is, he doesn't always take the approach with all people that he took among them. When he's with mature people, he doesn't restrict himself to knowing nothing but Jesus and him crucified.

But there's more theology, there's more deep things of God that he is quite happy to share with listeners who are capable of receiving it by being mature enough to process the solid food. He says, We do speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. Now, what he's saying is, When I was among you, I might have seemed like a fool because I did not demonstrate my intellectual powers.

I determined to be simple, keep it simple, keep it basic, depend on God's power, not on my persuasive abilities and so forth. But, he says, I really want you to know that you didn't see everything. There is more to me than met your eye.

There are cases where, among mature people, there are deeper things than I exposed you to, that I do expose others to. But, this wisdom that I do give to those who are

capable of taking it in is not human wisdom. It would not be something that you could arrive at through Greek philosophy, for example, or any other kind of mere mental exercise.

It is actually, as he goes on to say, a revealed wisdom. He says in verse 7, We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory. Now, he talks about the wisdom of God in a mystery.

Now, a mystery to us, in our language, we often think of a mystery as a story like, you know, a detective mystery or murder mystery where the clues are there, and if you know how to put the clues together, you can figure it out. But, it takes a lot of attention to the clues and analysis of the clues. It would take a special kind of mind to work it out, but it can be done.

You know, the clues are there, and you can work out the mystery. That's not what the word means in the Greek or in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the word mystery does not refer to something that a particularly astute person could work out and analyze and figure it out.

A mystery is that which only God knows and which cannot be known by man unless God discloses it, unless God reveals it. You can't figure it out through human wisdom. It is something that God has to reveal.

Certainly, that's what Paul says in verses 9 and 10, which we'll get to in a moment, where he says, I have not seen, ears not heard, neither is the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him. But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit. A mystery is something which only God knows, which prior to God revealing it, is a secret.

It's his secret. In the Old Testament, we read a number of times about the secret of the Lord. In Deuteronomy 29.29, it says, The secret things belong to the Lord, but the things he has revealed are for us and our children, that we might learn to do all the works of this law.

That's Deuteronomy 29.29. The secret things actually belong to the Lord, but he has revealed some things. That which he has not revealed is still his secret. But what he has revealed is not a secret any longer, and he wants us to know them.

And that is what Paul is referring to as a mystery. There are actually parallels to this statement in 1 Corinthians in three other epistles of Paul. The closest one for us to turn to is in Romans 16, verses 25 and 26.

Romans 16, 25 and 26. Paul says, Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now has been made manifest or

revealed by the prophetic scriptures, excuse me, and by the prophetic scriptures has been made known to all nations according to the commandment of the everlasting God for obedience to the faith. Now, he says, his gospel and the preaching of Jesus, he speaks of it as being according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret before, but has now been made known or manifested.

It is something that God, it was God's secret in former times, but it's now a mystery that's been revealed by God to some persons. And we'll see more about what Paul says about that in Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3 through 6. Ephesians 3, 3 through 6 says, How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which, that is the mystery that has been made known and revealed, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets, that the Gentiles, this is the mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs unto the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel. Now, Paul says there's a mystery that was not revealed in former times, but has now been revealed to the holy apostles and prophets.

What is the mystery? The unity of the body of Christ. That Jews and Gentiles who were very diverse previously would be made one, one body in Christ. The unity of the body of Christ is this secret, this mystery that was not revealed prior to it coming to the attention of the apostles and prophets by the agency of the Spirit's revelation.

In Colossians 1, 27 he says the same thing. Colossians 1, actually verses 26 and 27, Paul says, The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints, to them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now, Christ in you can be translated Christ among you.

Some translations reflect this, meaning among you Gentiles. That Christ or the Messiah would come to the Jews was no mystery, but that he would dwell among the Gentiles as well as the Jews is what Paul said in Ephesians 3 is the mystery, was that the Jews and Gentiles would be one body in Christ. The Jews were already a body, as it were, in the Old Testament.

They were God's firstborn, they were God's son, as he sometimes spoke. But what they did not understand until the apostles and prophets received by revelation was that the Gentiles, without becoming Jews, would be one body with the Jews, that Christ would be among them also in the same sense as with the Jews. Now, notice that Paul has in three places, Romans 16, Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1, made reference to a mystery that was revealed to him which was secret before, but now it is made known, and it is the secret, the mystery of the unity of the body of Christ.

Now, in 1 Corinthians you'll note that Paul has been complaining about the lack of observing this unity. The Corinthians apparently are ignorant of this unity. And he perhaps is saying, well, in chapter 2, maybe this is because I didn't teach you everything there is to know about this.

There are some mysterious things that we teach to more mature people. You babes just need to know how to get your sins forgiven. You babes just need to know how to relate to Christ and understand that you have died for your sins.

I only really was able to communicate to you things related to the cross of Christ, but I never really did get into the deeper things, the mystery that has been revealed. Those things, he says, we do teach among those who are more mature. And by the way, Ephesians and Colossians are epistles that were written to people who are more mature.

They are probably, of all the epistles, the ones that contain more of the deep things of the Spirit. But here he says, in 1 Corinthians 2, 7, But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Now, the rulers of this age could be a reference to people like Pilate and Herod and the Sanhedrin, who were, of course, the ones who were instrumental in getting Christ crucified.

Or, as many people think it, a reference to the demonic powers, the prince-ties and rulers of the darkness of this age. They didn't understand this. I do not know which Paul means.

There's a sense in which I suspect he may mean the earthly rulers didn't know this. They didn't know that they were playing into God's plan, or else they wouldn't have been so cooperative. If the Sanhedrin, for example, had known that by crucifying Jesus, they were going to, as a result, create an entity where the Jews and Gentiles were united in one body, to displace Judaism, in all likelihood, they would not have been interested in cooperating.

They would not have crucified Jesus. Now, Paul always, elsewhere, blames the Jews, the Jewish leaders, as the ones who crucified Jesus. We know the Romans were involved.

But you'll find Paul continually laying that to the door of the Jewish people themselves, whether he's preaching an act in the synagogue, or whether he's writing about them, as in 1 Thessalonians 2, for example, he says that the Jews crucified Jesus. And he may be saying here, if the Jewish rulers had understood that by crucifying Jesus, they were going to set in motion a course of events that would replace Judaism altogether with a new body that was both Jew and Gentile, they would never have cooperated. They would never have done this.

An alternative view, of course, is that the demonic powers, if they had known how the death of Christ would have been instrumental in defeating them and their purposes, they wouldn't have cooperated. And that is a possibility. That's certainly how I've usually heard it taught.

And I can't rule that out. But I'm not sure that that's what it means for one thing. It would suggest that Satan had no idea that the cross was going to be a victory over himself.

And yet, many people have pointed out that when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness, you know, telling him to bow down and worship him, and he'd give him all the kingdoms of the world, many, almost all evangelical teachers say, well, what Satan was trying to do was get Jesus to take a shortcut without the cross. Try to get Jesus to, I mean, Jesus is going to inherit all the kingdoms of the earth, but not by bowing to Satan. He had to do it through the means of going to the cross.

And some would say the essence of that temptation to Jesus was to try to get the results without the process. To try to gain the authority and power that God was eventually going to give him anyway, but to do so without going through the cross. But that would suggest, if that was Satan's motivation there in giving that temptation, that would suggest that Satan didn't want Jesus to go to the cross.

That there was something about the cross that Satan wanted to avoid, that Satan was afraid of, and was trying to persuade Jesus not to do it. And many people have asked me, and I've wondered it myself, I don't know the answer, did Satan know that the crucifixion of Jesus was going to result in his own defeat? And I don't know the answer to that. We know that Satan filled Judas to betray Jesus, which would suggest that maybe Satan was in favor of the cross, and therefore he was oblivious to his own defeat in it.

To tell you the truth, Satan I think is depicted as a person who is very confused in the Bible. And the demons too. They don't strike me as people who are extremely coherent.

They are personalities that seem to be, because of their rebellion against God, thrown into disarray, thrown into confusion. And I don't know if Satan really had a worked out understanding of what the cross was going to be all about. I don't know if he knew it was going to be his defeat or not.

I think he was just malicious. He just loved to rob, to kill, and destroy. And he did what he could to kill Jesus.

I don't know if he really thought out what the ramifications were going to be in a rational manner. But some people feel that what Paul is saying here is that Satan and the demons themselves didn't understand what the cross was about. And if they had, they certainly wouldn't have engineered their own defeat by having Christ crucified.

All things being considered, I think the likelihood is greater that verse 8 here is talking

about the earthly rulers, probably of the Jews. Just because I don't know of any other place in Paul's writings where he speaks of the demons as having crucified Jesus. The people he's talking about are people who crucified Jesus and would not have done so had they understood what was going on.

And I don't know of any place in Paul's writings where he says the demons or Satan crucified Jesus, but he frequently says that the Jews did. Which might incline toward that view, that the rulers of this age are in fact the Sanhedrin, and those that condemn Christ. Remember, Jesus himself said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.

He wasn't talking about the demons then. Now, verse 9. But as it is written, and where it is written is in Isaiah, I have not seen nor ear heard nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him. There may be a couple of passages in Isaiah that are in mind here.

It's not exactly a direct quote of either of them. Isaiah 64.4 says, For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any god besides you who acts for the one who waits for him. That has, in that verse, some structure like the verse in question here.

That is probably the verse that's closest to the one that he's quoting here. Isaiah 65.17 actually is a description or a declaration that God creates a new heaven and a new earth. Some people feel that this verse in Isaiah, or this verse actually in Corinthians that Paul is using, is talking about heaven.

It's talking about going to heaven, that no one has seen heaven, no one has heard of it, the things that God has prepared for those who love him. I think this verse has been popularized, for instance, by Jack Ticktract. He quotes this verse all the time when he shows a picture of people going to heaven.

I have not seen or heard the things God has prepared. But I don't think Paul is talking about heaven here. For one thing, some eyes have seen.

Paul, for instance, had been in the third heaven. He'd seen heaven. But what he's talking about here are the deep things of God.

He's not talking about our eternal destiny. He's talking about the deep things of God, and I know it because of what he says in verse 10. After saying, eyes haven't seen it, ears haven't heard it, it hasn't entered the mind of man, he says, but God has revealed them to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, just the deep things of God.

What is it that man's eyes and ears and thoughts have not previously perceived? The mystery that he's talking about. The deep spiritual things of the unity and the oneness of the spiritual body of Christ. This is the mystery that has been revealed to Paul and the

apostles through the Spirit, but was not seen or known or thought of previously.

He calls that the deep things of God. So, the deep things of God, the meat as opposed to the milk, is to do with this plan of God in the body of Christ to bring oneness in the Spirit, to make a new entity, or as he puts it in Ephesians 2.15, to make in himself one new man of the two. Now, in verse 11 he says, That is, no one really knows what's going on in a man except his own heart and his own spirit.

He knows himself, but he doesn't show everyone else. But likewise God. No one knows the deep things of God except the Spirit of God.

Therefore, we can't know the deep things of God unless God reveals them. Just like you can't know what my secret motivations are and what's in my heart unless I tell you. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

No one knows the secret things of God except the Spirit of God. But he does reveal them to us by his Spirit. And he says in verse 12, Now, we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

That is, in Christ much has been given to us, spiritual blessings in heavenly places and so forth, but these are revealed to us by the Spirit. We wouldn't have access to knowing of them without his revealing them. He says, Now, this last line, can have two meanings.

It's unclear. Different translators do different things with it. Literally, it either means combining spiritual things with spiritual men, meaning we only teach these spiritual truths to spiritual people, not to immature, carnal people like Corinthians.

Or it can mean combining spiritual words with spiritual truths. Because I don't use the words that man's wisdom teaches, but the words the Holy Spirit teaches. He could mean these spiritual truths are expressed by us in spiritual words, words that the Spirit gives us.

I think perhaps the meaning here, however, in the context is, we tell these spiritual truths to spiritual people. Compare is not the right verb. Combine is.

We combine spiritual truths with spiritual listeners. We don't give spiritual truths to carnal listeners. Okay, well, we're about out of time here.

Let me just say, in verse... Well, I'm going to have to wait until tomorrow, I'm afraid, to get into verse 14. I'd rather close at the end of the chapter, but I just cannot in the next 30 seconds give a fair treatment of these last few verses. So we'll cut off here at verse 13 and pick up at verse 14 next time.