

## 1 Corinthians Class 3 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

This class is class number 3 in the series that we're doing on the epistle that Paul sent to Corinth—1 Corinthians. We hope you've enjoyed the first couple of classes.

As we've mentioned, due to some technical issues we're not going to be able to answer questions right now, but please go ahead and send them in, and we will get to them as quickly as we can.

So, as always, as we begin our classes, we certainly want God's guidance and blessing upon them. So if you would join me, please bow your heads, and we'll ask God's blessing.

[Prayer]

[1:32]

We would like to pick up where we left off last time. Now, through the first two classes we made it through the first 18 verses of **chapter 1** of **1 Corinthians**, along with a rather extensive background we had in the first class. So we'd like to pick it up there. But again, I'd like to remind you as we begin, there are certain themes that we're going to follow throughout this entire book of **1 Corinthians**, and it's important to keep those in mind.

I've mentioned one of those themes, and that is that there was a problem concerning pride in the area of Corinth, and there are various reasons for it. But of course, as we said, pride is not something that's isolated to a first century Church in Greece. Pride is a problem that exists in our world today and continues to exist among mankind and all that period in between. So it's a very important issue for us to consider and to realize what's going on.

But there is another aspect of this that's going to tie the book together as well. We probably won't exactly bring it out, but I'd like you to be alert to it. What do you see here that Paul is using as a link that ties together much of what he says, from the beginning all the way to the end? I think you'll find it very helpful, and we begin to focus upon that a little bit more.

Now, one of the things that we brought up in the last class was concerning the subject of division. And, we have often said that division is a very serious problem. But again, as I was trying to bring out in the last class, and I want to just summarize here: remember that division is not the problem. Division is the manifestation of the problem. Division is what comes about when we don't address the real problem in the first place.

I was thinking about that even today in preparing for this class, and I was thinking about a physical example that probably most of us could easily understand. Suppose you are a passenger in a car that somebody else is driving, and as they start down the road they say, "My, this car is really pulling to the left." Well, that would be a matter of concern.

Especially, the faster you went, the more you'd be concerned about that. But, suppose the person who's driving says, "Well, okay, I can solve that problem of pulling to the left by steering harder to the right." Well, okay, that may get you somewhere. But I think, as you go faster and faster, and as you're the passenger in this vehicle and someone's pulling further and further to the right to try to keep the car from veering to the left, the very logical thing you'd say is, "Shouldn't we stop and see if maybe we have a low tire or something that's causing this instead of just counteracting it?" And before long, if someone refuses to do that, well, I think as a passenger you'd say, "Can I get out of here—because I don't want to drive with somebody who's not willing to look at the problem."

We have to address the problem. If we had a low tire and it's making the car pull to the left and we don't address that, before long the tire's going to go bad, and we're not going to be able to go anywhere. So, sometimes we must address the problem—figure out what that is—not just the symptom or the manifestation of that problem.

[4:46]

That's what we find where the Church was concerned as well. I think if we look back years ago to when the Church—back in the 1990s—had a number of the problems that it had, we basically had that kind of a situation. We saw the Church beginning to fragment, and yet, what was causing the problem people weren't willing to address. So eventually it wasn't safe to stay there. Eventually, there had to be a separation of ways because people were not willing to address what the real issue was—the false doctrines that were being taught. So that produced a division, but division wasn't the problem. Division was the manifestation of something that people were not really willing to look at.

So, we need to understand that principle as we go forward and we look at the Corinthian Church and the lessons that are there for us. Yes, we certainly don't want the problem of division. But again, remember, we have to address the fundamental issues, and that's what Paul is doing, especially as we start into this book.

So let's pick it up again where we left off. We were in **1 Corinthians chapter 1**. We got through **verse 18**. So let's pick it up in **verse 19**. Now, Paul is talking about how the message of the gospel is to those who are not being called, those who don't understand it right now. It seems foolishness to them. Following a dead Jewish carpenter who was executed as a criminal doesn't make sense. And yet, for those of us who understand what the truth is, whose minds have been opened by God, we recognize this is not foolishness at all. This is one of the most profound and amazing stories that we could ever come across.

So Paul continues with this concept here.

Let's just review [**1 Corinthians 1**] **verse 18**:

*For the message of the cross (or Christ's death) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

And Paul continues:

**[Verse 19]** *For it is written:*

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

Now the context of that is actually in **Isaiah chapter 29 verses 13 and 14**, and here's what God inspired Isaiah to say:

**13** *Therefore the Lord said:*

*"Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths  
And honor Me with their lips,  
But have removed their hearts far from Me,  
And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,  
14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work  
Among this people,  
A marvelous work and a wonder;  
For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,  
And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden."*

We shouldn't be surprised at that. God says that's what's going to happen, and sure enough, in our world today it's happening all around us.

He says, "I'm going to bring this false knowledge to nothing." It means "to cause something to be disestablished, to nullify it." All these things that people think are so true and so important are being set aside because Christianity is not about human wisdom. It's not about human reasoning abilities, intelligence, scientific inquiry. Until we recognize and acknowledge the limitations of man's wisdom apart from God, we'll never really be able to understand God's wisdom.

[8:04]

**Proverbs 9** and **verse 10** We'll look at it again a little bit later, but it says:

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

This is where it really begins, and if we're not willing to begin there, then we're really not going to have the right foundation.

So Paul continues, in observing the world of his day—and, remember, this was the center of civilization of that world.

[1 **Corinthians 1:20**] *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*

The word *scribe* that's used here, *grammateus*, is not what we normally think of as a "scribe." One of the commentaries, *Louw & Nida*, puts it this way. It says:

The traditional translation of *grammateus* in context, such as **1 Corinthians 1:20** and **Matthew 13:52**, has been rendered as "scribe," but this generally is misleading since the term "scribe" is usually restricted in meaning to one who writes or copies documents. A *grammateus* in Jewish life or Bible times would have been an expert in the Law or a scholar in the Holy Scriptures, not a mere copier of documents.

So when we talk about a scribe here, or even when we read it in the Gospels where Jesus confronted the Scribes and Pharisees, we're talking about individuals whose profession was to be an expert in biblical law and to render decisions based upon that.

Then he says, *where is the disputer of this age?* A different word, it means: "One who debates and disputes; a person who is skilled in, or very likely involved in, expressing strong differences; a debater; a disputer," and has generally been acknowledged to refer to an individual who may be, what we might consider today, a lawyer, an individual who is an expert, perhaps, in civil law or the things of this world. Their focus is upon their own reasoning.

I couldn't help but think in going through this that I was watching a TED Talk the other day. Now, I enjoy TED Talks—they have a lot of good things to them. One of the things that you will always see though is that they focus entirely on what humans can do apart from God. God is never mentioned—He's never a part of it—so they come up with some interesting things. But I think for you and me, we have to recognize the limitation there—that leaving God out of the picture. That's a very important part that we don't want to leave out.

But as I was watching one the other day, there was a very well-educated man, very well-spoken. Happened to be a weatherman in this case, and that he had his PhD in meteorology. But he was giving a presentation about bias in people's judgments, and he talked about three fundamental biases that people very often have. One was called Confirmation Bias, which is when we read something and it confirms what we already believe, we tend to give more weight to that. And that's certainly true. He talked about another bias that had to do with thinking that we know more than we really do. And again, probably a lot of times we do that.

[11:16]

I find that a lot of times in social media when people are commenting about health items, and I realize they have no training; they have no idea what they're talking about. They're

going based upon what they read on the internet, which a lot of times is not really all that valuable. I know one time I took a course in college, a semester of biochem and nutrition, and by the time I finished that semester, the one lesson that I learned is that this is too complicated a subject for me to just go around giving people advice. But, evidently a lot of people haven't figured that out yet, so people think they know more than they do. And he mentioned one other kind of bias that's very common. There's quite a list, if you were to look it up.

But the thing that I found most fascinating in this man's presentation, he was talking about how common, everyday people like you and me don't believe the same thing that scientists believe, and that much of this is because we have a bias in our approach, and we don't look at things the way that they do. But it was absolutely fascinating that the man who presented the talk was in fact guilty of all three of the same biases that he was saying everyone else had. Now, I'm not putting him down. I'm simply saying we all have to recognize that we can look at things with a bias and think that we're not, and yet very often we do.

So I think, in part, that's what Paul is talking about. Here are the scribes, the experts in biblical law: "We know this." Here are those who are the experts in the law of what we find around us, or perhaps scientific principles, or whatever, and basically [he] says, "Okay, here are all of these people who are operating leaving God out of the picture." And God looks at this and says, "This is foolish. These people come to foolish decisions because they are relying on the wisdom of the world." That's not the way we want to be.

When we talk about "the world" in this sense, I saw a wonderful definition one time that described this word (*Kosmos* is the root word that is used here in the Greek.), that described this as: "All that goes into making up our world, leaving God out." Everything that goes into all of the intelligence, the culture, the wonderful things that man can do—because God gave us a world in which there's a mixture of good and evil—man can do many wonderful things. But when you leave God out of the picture, that changes things—that changes the whole perspective.

So, when he talks about *the wisdom of the world*, he's talking about *the wisdom of the world*, leaving God's wisdom out.

[13:57]

He goes on to say, **verse 21**:

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*

That sounds kind of a funny statement there, but basically what he's saying is that God determined in His wisdom that He was not going to make His truth available through

human reason. That it wasn't going to be something that you and I could just simply sit around and reason our way through. Probably, in part that's because, if He had done it that way, then people who are better- educated are going to feel that they have a better opportunity to understand the truth. People who have not had that opportunity—and there are millions upon the surface of the earth today who've never had an opportunity for any decent education and will not in this life—could feel like: “Well, how can I understand when you have to do it through your own reasoning and knowledge and so on?” So God said, “No, I'm not going to do it that way. I'm going to make the truth of God available through the foolishness of preaching a message, of people being able to hear it in that way.”

It says, these individuals through their own wisdom didn't come to know God. They may have known some things about God. They may have picked up a bit here and there. But this isn't saying “know 'about' God”; it says to *know God*. You can't come into that personal relationship with God on your own intellectual ability. God has to make that possible.

**Verse 22** (He says:) *For (the) Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;*

When you examine the history of these people—and again, think about the things that were said to Jesus Christ when He was alive on the earth—the Jews continually asking: “Give us a sign. Give us a sign.” And of course, He gave the famous example of: “No, the only sign you're going to have is *the sign* that was of *Jonah*, of three days and three nights, and I will give you that sign. I'll be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*.” But they wanted some other miraculous thing.

[15:59]

Now when you stop and think about that, look at all the miracles Jesus was doing. He had done all kinds of things, but to them, unless you can produce, at your will, a sign, then we really don't believe God is behind you. It's really kind of a strange statement, when you stop and think about it, because no people in the history of the world have had as many miraculous signs as the Israelite peoples. But they didn't believe, because those miraculous things don't create faith. They don't create a converted people. They can't convert people. They're wonderful. They can be very helpful. They can reinforce. In fact, probably many of us, if we were to sit around and share some of our own experiences of how God's dealt in our lives miraculously, we strengthen one another in that. But our confidence for the future, our faith, isn't built on some miracle. It's built on the Spirit of God working within each of us and changing us. So he said the Jews are constantly looking for some outward sign.

The Greeks, on the other hand, are not especially impressed with that because, of course, they've seen all kinds of things take place. There were supernatural things that took place, but they did not come from God. There were all kinds of other things that they may have

seen or imagined because the Greeks were very creative people, but they were looking for very clear logic and reasoning. They want to be able to reason their way through things, and God decided that it's not always going to be that way. Yes, the mind is used, and what God is doing is logical, as we'll see when we get into the second chapter, but not necessarily logical to the human brain separated from God. There are things that just don't make sense.

[17:48]

Think of, for example, something that virtually all of us do—I hope we all do as we have that opportunity—paying a tithe. It doesn't make sense to take ten percent of your income, send it off, and then somehow think that you are able to get by better than you were before. But it works, doesn't it? It's one of those things that we see.

How can you take one day out of every week and set it aside, where you don't do any of those work things or things that you need to in those ways, and somehow think you can get everything done? But it works, doesn't it?

As we do those things, we see that God is working out some things behind the scenes that aren't necessarily just strictly logical. I may not be able to put my finances on a spreadsheet to show exactly how I'm better off with tithing, but I know by experience I'm better off with tithing. We've all been down that road.

So the Greeks are seeking one thing, and the Jews are seeking something else, but that's not what God is providing. I think, as well, rather than thinking of this as a description of simply the first century world—the way the Jews and the Greeks were in that time—those same two approaches exist today.

For a lot of people, religion is an experience. They want to feel good. They want to have their emotions tweaked. They want to have music that sweeps them along. They want to go through experiences. Some want to have speaking in tongues or handling snakes or all of these things. And they're so impressed with all of those things. "Oh, let's have a healing revival." But God doesn't work that way. Most of us know that when it comes to, for example, healing, we go somewhere with an elder and privately we're anointed, and God takes care of things. We don't do that in front of the Church. It's not a spectacle. It's a private matter, and we take care of it in that way.

On the other hand, we also live in a world where science dominates. But science is physical, and it limits itself to only those things that can be discerned with the physical senses, measured, seen in those ways, perceived by the physical things, and it completely ignores anything outside of that, and basically says it doesn't exist. So, that's really very similar to the world that Paul was dealing with in first century Rome.

[20:18]

So, what does Paul say we do?

Well, **verse 23**:

*...we preach Christ (that's the Messiah) crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,*

The Jews said, "Oh, no, no. We can't have a Messiah who was executed like a criminal and hung on a tree. That's a terrible thing." The Greeks say, "How do you worship a dead man?" It makes no sense to them.

But, as Paul goes on in **verse 24**:

*...to those who are called,—*

There's a difference there. This isn't an intellectual matter. It's a matter of being called.

**24** *...to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

So, we look at this, and we say, "When we understand this, okay, what does that do for us?"

Now, remember we're dealing with a Church where it's not a matter of people going off and joining different organizations. That's a kind of a different level of division there. But we're being told the problems exist within the congregation, that people are kind of separating themselves from each other. And Paul is saying, "Okay, wait a minute. Why would you be separate? To those of us who are called, which should be all of us, whether we're Jew or Greek, whatever our background may be, whatever our outlook may have been in the world around us, we don't leave God out of the picture."

And when we look at this, we recognize that Jesus Christ and the plan that God is working through Him shows the amazing power of God. I mean, Jesus Christ died, and He was raised from the dead to live forever. How do you know that God has the ability to raise you from the dead to live forever? Well, Jesus Christ shows that. He's accomplished that. He is the One who's already been raised from the dead. It shows the power that God has when God chooses to use that power. We don't have to be concerned that He doesn't have the power to raise from the dead. He's already proven He does. And, it also shows God's amazing wisdom that He is the One who has the ability to work out this amazing, amazing plan.

[22:43]

Now remember what we find in **Acts chapter 4** and **verse 12**. He says:

*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

There is no other pathway. Jesus Christ is the pathway that leads to salvation. No other way does. Nothing else humans can do will lead there. So if a person says, “Oh, no, no, I can't follow Him. He claimed to be the Messiah, but He couldn't be because of what happened to Him.” Well, then you're cutting off your only pathway to salvation. If you say, “Oh, no, that doesn't make sense to me; that's not logical,” you're cutting off your only path to salvation. Jesus Christ is that one and only pathway that leads there.

And he goes on to say here in **verse 25**:

*Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Now, obviously God is not foolish, and God is not weak. But Paul is making a statement: “If God were weak, even at that, He would still be stronger than all of mankind together. If He were foolish, He would still be wiser than all of mankind together.”

So, he tells us in **verse 26**:

*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*

This phrase here, *you see your calling*—there's another translation which I like very well that just simply says: “Behold. Look at this.”

We've explained before, when you come across the word “behold” in Scripture, don't just read over it. It is intended to be an invitation for you to look through a different set of eyes. And that's what Paul is saying. “Look at this; look at your calling, brethren. We're the ones that are called.”

In the midst of difficult times, very often it's easy for us to focus on the difficulties we're going through—to see the things of our own lives that we're going through. But Paul says, “No, look instead at the calling you have. You are called to something far greater than anything you could possibly have in this life. No matter what it is, no matter what goals you have in this life, or how important they are, and how good they may be, don't get them out of perspective. You're called to something far greater than anything this life can ever offer.”

[25:09]

So he says, “Look at this, brethren. When you look at your calling, *not many wise men according to the flesh* have been called.” Now, we're going to look at that word, and we'll talk about it a little more, even in the next chapter. But the word here—the root word for *according to the flesh*—the root word for *flesh* is *sarx*, s-a-r-x, and it basically refers to all that goes into making us a physical person, all the physical parts of us as a human being, or for that matter, it could even refer to an animal.

We will find the word coming up again—especially when we get to **chapter 3**, we'll talk about it. The word is there in a different form, *sarkikos*, and the translation that we find there is “carnal.” Now, that's very helpful. It helps us to recognize what “carnal” means. It's being guided by the flesh, living in this physical life and not really thinking about God at all.

So he said, when we consider in the eyes of mankind, in the way that people look at things, there are *not many wise* men that God calls. God doesn't call many people today who are considered, in the eyes of the world, to be wise people. Oh, it doesn't say that there aren't any, but for the most part, not very many.

He says, *not many mighty*.

Okay, so God doesn't tend to call the powerful of this world, or *noble*. There's nothing wrong with nobility. That's not what he's saying here. The word *noble* is a word that means “wellborn; an individual of noble birth; an individual who has been given opportunities for education, for training, not just the learning that a school might have, but education in life, a level of wisdom and how to apply things in life.” All of that's embodied in the concept of “nobility”—or “wellborn,” as the case is here. God doesn't call a lot of people who come from that kind of a background. He hasn't chosen to do that.

[27:12]

**[1 Corinthians 1:26]** —*Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*

Now we're going to look at this a little further here, but I want you to note that word *chosen*. Actually, in this verse and the next, three times that phrase is going to be used. And in each case, it emphasizes that God is the One who does the choosing. The word has to do with selecting out of a larger group. And it's saying here that God looks down upon a large group, and He has made a selection, and that selection involves, as it says here, *the foolish things of the world*.

The phrase there has to do with those who are probably looked down upon as not being very wise, and he talks about those who are—He chooses those *to put to shame*, or to, in a sense, “embarrass” those who are *wise*. In other words, the *wise* people look at them, and they kind of look down their noses, and: “Well, what could those people know? I mean, after all, they're not scientists; they're not educators; they're not as we are.” And God chose those people as the ones He's working out His plan through. And again, he says *the weak*—those who are not powerful—*to put to shame* those who were *mighty*.

And then he talks about, in **verse 28**, *the base things*, or those who are not of *noble* birth. It's just the opposite of the *noble* we were talking about.

Now, I think one of the things we have to keep in mind here too is, Paul is making the point that it's not a matter that the *wise* and the *mighty* have misjudged these people. No, they really are *the foolish of the world*, and *the weak of the world*, and those who come from very low background. They really are. God's not saying they're misjudged. Those are the people God chose.

Now he's going to tell us in a moment why, and it's a very important reason why. And again, we're addressing the real problem that's at the core of what's going on in Corinth.

[29:32]

So, let's go on in **verse 28**:

*and the base things* (the things that are not of noble birth and powerful in that way) ... *the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,*

Maybe not the best translation in English, but the sense of it is that it's God—I mean, again, God is not choosing physical things. He is not choosing bricks and stones and pieces of wood. We're talking about choosing people; that's what God chooses. And He's chosen those who, in the eyes of the world, are not the wisest, not the most powerful, not the most noble, but instead who were base, who in the eyes of the world really are pretty much inconsequential.

Now there are a lot of people who would fit into that category in today's world—people who live out their entire lives without anybody but their own family, and their neighbors, knowing anything about them. And of course, for that matter, that's the way many of us are, aren't we? We don't impress the world. Nobody's out there wanting to interview you or me about some contribution that we've made to mankind. No, we're pretty much what he describes here.

But God is doing that for a purpose. He's doing that to *bring*, as it says here, *to nothing the things* which are so highly respected in the world around us. God is using individuals who are totally unimpressive in order to show what really is important. If God chose impressive people, there would be almost a conflict between what God is doing and what man is doing. And it's like God's having a contest to see who's got the brightest people.

No, it's not there at all. But he tells us why in **verse 29**:

*that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

We look at ourselves, and this again tells us what Paul is telling the fine folks of Corinth, and what he's telling us, what God is telling us as well. We look at ourselves, and there's nothing here that's impressive. We don't look around as we go to Sabbath services and say, "Oh, wow! Look at all these impressive people that are here!" No, we're all fitting in

pretty much in the categories that he describes here. Once in a while, yes, God may call a well-known or important or powerful person, but, for the most part, no, those aren't the ones that make up the Church of God.

[32:03]

So, when we come together and we see the amazing things that God is doing, we know it's not because of us. It's not because we're so good, we're so powerful, we have such wonderful character. It's because God is doing things in us. So there's no reason for any of us to glory before God. There's no reason for any of us to boast and to say, "Well, you know, I'm perhaps a little better than most of these people." No, none of us fit that category at all. We are just as exactly what he's described here. We can never think that we have earned God's calling or God's blessing. No, God has called a different kind of people for that.

But I really am fascinated by the comment that *William Barclay* makes here, and I think it really puts this in a wonderful perspective. He says:

In the Roman Empire there were sixty million slaves. In the eyes of the law, a slave was a "living tool," a thing and not a person at all. A master could fling out an old slave as he would fling out an old spade or hoe. Even a slave's children belonged to the master. Christianity made people who were "things" into real men and women, more, into sons and daughters of God. It gave those who had no respect, their self-respect. It told men that, even if they did not matter to other men, they still mattered intensely to God. It told men who, in the eyes of the world, were worthless, that in the eyes of God they were worth the death of His only Son.

It's an amazing statement. And I think it captures the sense that, when you understand your calling, when you "behold," when you look at your calling, it's a very humbling thing. It's not something to make us proud. It's something that makes us very humble.

He goes on to say, **verse 30**:

*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, (You live within the sphere of influence of Jesus Christ.) who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*

Now we could spend a good deal of time, probably, talking about each of those. But the point that he's making is: when we look at the example of Jesus Christ, for us He is the epitome of true wisdom. And therefore, when we want to learn wisdom, we don't go to the world, we don't go to the ancient philosophers, we don't go to the movers and shakers of today. Our standard is Jesus Christ, and He shows what true wisdom really is. He shows what true righteousness is in a way that no human being ever has. He shows what it means to live "sanctified," set apart by God for God's purpose. And He is the One who

redeems us, who buys us out of our slavery.

[35:05]

Paul wants them to all understand that the reason they are called now is not because of anything they brought to God. The decision is entirely from Him. He chooses. He calls. We have the opportunity to respond. And the same is true today.

It's interesting to note as you look at that—just note that verse again—as we look at that verse.

**[I Corinthians 1:30]** *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us—*

Paul includes himself. He doesn't set himself apart and say, "Somehow I'm better than the rest of you are. These lessons—I'm going to teach all of you." No, Paul says, "I'm a part of this too."

*(He became) —for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*

We have a wisdom that is far greater than the world's wisdom. We live in a righteous way of life, in contrast to the way the world lives. We are truly set apart from the rest of mankind. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has been given for us. The point that Paul is making is that all of this is because of God. None of us deserve any of those blessings.

So, he says in **verse 31**:

*that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."*

There's nothing that we have to take glory about in ourselves. Now again, think back to what's going on in Corinth. There are people who are saying, "Well, my perspective on this is a little bit—I'm following Paul, I'm following Peter, because they really have the right perspective, and those other people don't necessarily see it the right way. My ideas are the ones that I think are right." And Paul is saying, "You don't have anything that God hasn't given you."

That's a great leveler isn't it? I mean, how can we be proud of ourselves when every one of us had to be chosen by God and that's the only reason we're here?

Notice that passage that Paul is referring to. It's back in **Jeremiah chapter 9 verses 23 and 24**.

**[Jeremiah 9:] 23** *(He says:) Thus says the LORD:*

*"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,  
Let not the mighty man glory in his might,  
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;*

**24** *But let him who glories glory in this,  
That he understands and knows Me,  
That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness,  
judgment, and righteousness in the earth.  
For in these I delight,” says the LORD.*

Now, one of the things that we might note there as well is that, though this verse was originally applied to the God of the Old Testament, Paul now applies it to Jesus Christ in the New, and that tells us something special as well.

[38:01]

Alright, let's continue on into **chapter 2**.

**Chapter 2** is to me a really fascinating chapter. Well, the whole book is, so I'm glad to be able to teach it. But there're some really fascinating things here, in this chapter, that take us back to a unique understanding in the Church of God, and I think it's important for us to get this as well. So, let's continue on.

Remember, of course, as we go through this, chapter/verse divisions are artificial. That doesn't mean they're bad; they're very helpful for us. It's a lot easier to find things that way. There's a genuine attempt by people to break things down in a way that is easier for us to follow. But remember, Paul didn't break it down that way. It's a continuation of what he's just been talking about. So the first word we find is “and.”

Okay. So he's continuing this thought:

**[1 Corinthians 2:1]** *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.*

Now, stop and think about that. When Paul came to Corinth, where'd he been? He had just been in Athens. He had been in what was probably the intellectual center of Ancient Greece. It was still viewed as a great center of learning, even though the city had deteriorated a great deal in the centuries since Athens' greatness. But he'd been there. He'd have been on Mars Hill. He spoke to the leading people of Athens, and virtually nothing came from it. Even though Paul presents there in **Acts chapter 18** the most—one of the most brilliant presentations of the gospel, virtually no one was willing to respond. There are a few names that are mentioned there, but there really wasn't much.

And then Paul had come to Corinth. And here was this city with its reputation for profligacy, for all kinds of licentious living. People are known—they come to Corinth to do evil things, and this is the way everybody lived, at least it seemed like everyone. And yet, after a short period of time, Paul is told by Jesus Christ: “Stay here. I have many people.”

So, he says: “I came on the scene and in Athens”—and in a sense, Paul did use the

methodology of the Greeks. He spoke to them on their terms. He quoted Greek poets and historians, and he spoke to them in a very reasoned and logical way. He says: “When I came to Corinth, I didn’t bring that approach with me. I didn’t come with some impressive eloquence that would move people. I didn’t come with the wisdom of the day, declaring to you all of this about God.”

**[1 Corinthians 2:2]** *For (he says, **verse 2**) I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

Remember, “Jesus Christ” isn’t like first and last name. “Jesus” is the name. “Christ” is the office—Jesus, the Messiah. He said: “I came to teach you—what I brought to you was Jesus, the Messiah, and Him crucified—and all that goes with that.” It isn’t a matter that Paul came on the scene in Corinth and all he said was “Jesus died for your sins. Jesus died for your sins.” No, that isn’t the message here. He came and taught about Jesus, who was in fact the promised Messiah who, —maybe we shouldn’t put it that way—who **is** in fact the promised Messiah, and that He had to die, that this was a part of God’s plan. So, he’s saying: “I brought all of this to you, but this is the core message. I brought the gospel message—the sacrifice of Christ makes it possible for you and me to have hope.”

[41:50]

So he said: “This is the core message I brought to you. I didn’t try to get off on all kinds of other philosophies. I didn’t debate all kinds of things.” Probably [he] didn’t come on the scene debating the ideas that the Greeks had about how creation came about, or what this or that god had done. No, he didn’t come on the scene with that. He came on the scene with the basic message that: “Here’s the gospel, and we brought it to you.”

He says, in **verse 3**:

*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*

In other words: “I didn’t come on the scene, and I wasn’t just this real impressive person. I didn’t come there and you would’ve thought, ‘Wow, this is a person who’s strong no matter what!’ No, sometimes I was weak; sometimes I struggled; sometimes I trembled. Sometimes there were things that left me so concerned and maybe worried and upset that there’s—I don’t know what’s going to happen.” In that way Paul’s like you and me. I mean, it would be wonderful to say that once you received the Spirit of God, you never worry about anything anymore. You just know: “God’s going to take care of me, and everything’s fine.”

But life isn’t that way. We all understand there are times when we get very concerned, times we get fearful. And Paul said, “When I came to you, that’s what I was. I wasn’t a great, impressive person. I didn’t come there as somebody who’s almost superhuman. I came just like you, and I brought this message for all of you.”

I think it's true that, you know, today as we deal with the Church today, each minister in each area has his strengths, and he has—well, perhaps the term we like to use is “growth areas.” We all have areas where we can grow. There are things that we’re good at. There are things we’re really not very good at. And all of us probably know, as the years go by, there are certain ministers that we can really connect with. Some that—it just seems like, yes, that one, when they speak or when they're around, they really understand me, and I can really connect with what they're saying and doing. There are others who maybe have different strengths and weaknesses, but, God is the One who is working through each of us.

I think that's part of what he's saying. “Don't confuse the messenger with the message.” God can provide the message through very weak instruments. And He does very often. In fact, sometimes—and I'm not talking about the ministry here—but sometimes God communicates messages to us through people who aren't even converted. Sometimes we learn lessons from people who don't even know God right now, but God can use them. I mean, after all, we all know the story of Balaam and his jackass that spoke. If God can do that, He can speak through unconverted people too. It's God who conveys the message, and that's what Paul is saying. “I wasn't some super great speaker, some wonderful philosopher that everyone flocks to. It was just me—with all my strengths and weaknesses, with all the things that I can do, and the things that I can't do, I was there.”

[44:57]

He says, **verse 4**:

*...my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*

You see, Paul is speaking things that—well, let me go back to the word *persuasive*. Another translation puts it: “plausible.” Okay? In other words, it's something that: “Well, yeah, I can see that that makes sense.” Paul said, “That isn't what I came with. I didn't come trying to convince you in some way of what might or might not be. I came on the scene, and I showed you something, the *demonstration of the Spirit and of the power* that Spirit imparts.”

What do we mean by that? What did Paul do? Well, he came on the scene, and he showed what the power of God does in a human life. His life was an example of that. There were those with him who were examples of that.

Paul grew up in the strictest sect of Judaism. He was a Pharisee. Now, these people had seen Pharisees before. They knew what they were like. And Paul comes on the scene, and he's very different. He's not like that. Yes, he has those biblical standards to live by, but he's not their critic. He is not their judge. He's not their condemner. He's somebody who's reaching out to them, offering to share with them everything that he has. He's a

different person. And, the message that he brings is a message that changes what kind of a person you are. There's power in that message.

Today, very often when somebody has a serious personality issue or character issue, there are those who would say: "Well, ultimately they may be able to bring it under control, but they're really not going to change that much from what they are. Once they're this kind of a person, they're always going to be that way."

God comes along with His Spirit, and He says, "No, you can be a different person. You can change at the very deepest level of what you are." And Paul, by bringing this message, shows in his own life—and, remember, there are those who were with him who were also setting an example. And as people are called, and they receive the Spirit of God, they're changing too, at very deep and qualitative levels.

[47:19]

So he said, "What did you see? You saw the demonstration of what the Spirit of God can do in a human life." We're not talking about calling down fire from heaven. We're not talking about incredible miracles that people see in that way. We're talking about the changing of human lives, what they are, how we become a different person under the influence of the Spirit of God. And he says, "There's a reason for that."

**Verse 5** *that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Now, let's consider that for a moment—that *that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. That phrase *your faith*, an interesting phrase, *he pistis humōn*. It literally means "the faith which belongs to you, your personal faith, what you base your life upon" is not supposed to be based on the wisdom of men, some wonderful, clever argument that human beings can come up with. No, your faith is based upon what you see the Spirit of God doing in your life—that God's Spirit changes you. If we're truly Christians, if we've truly received the Spirit of God and we're using that Spirit as God intends, we should be able to see that, "I'm not the same person I used to be. I'm a different person."

We sometimes joke about the fact that you see people that you haven't seen in many years, who don't know you as a Christian, who just simply—perhaps neighbors, friends that you had before—and they say: (It's kind of seen as a compliment.) "Oh, you haven't changed at all." But, as Christians, that's the last thing we want to hear. We want to know that we really have changed, that we really are different people. We need to see that.

And as we see in our lives, personally—and frankly, as we see in the lives of our brethren—the changes that take place. Ever watched someone who comes to the Church relatively new and see how they change over a period of time? How their outlook changes, their approach? They become a different person because of the influence of the Spirit of God. We should see that in others. We should see it in our own lives as well. And when

you have that, when you see that, your personal confidence and trust in God isn't based on some clever argument. It's based on what you see the Spirit of God doing, and that's what Paul is saying. It's not some clever message.

[49:59]

**Verse 6** *However* (he says), —

In saying all this about the wisdom of the world, and how God makes nothing of it—how He sets it aside, how He shows that what man considers to be great wisdom is in fact foolishness—he says, “Don't get the idea that we're not really speaking wisdom. We are. It's just a wisdom people don't understand.”

—*we 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.*

It's an interesting phrase there, *coming to nothing*. It's a word that means “this is continually going on.” It isn't just in his day. It's a process that continues through time, that the *rulers* of this world and their *wisdom* are just continually *coming to nothing*. It seems like there's always some new approach, some new idea: “Oh, if we approached man's problems this way, we can resolve them.” We don't resolve them. They're still there. We haven't found a solution to war. We haven't found a solution to what man does to his fellow man. We haven't found a solution to the serious problems that face our world.

Man keeps coming up with all of these human solutions based on human wisdom, and they never solve the problems. We can have all the wonderful peace talks we want, but they never produce peace because man doesn't know that way. Only God can do that. So the wisdom that is being spoken among God's people is not a human wisdom, but he says it's spoken among the *mature*. That's an important concept that we need to have.

[51:43]

Let's consider what God inspired James to say back in **James chapter 3**.

**[James 3] verse 13** (He says:) *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

Godly wisdom doesn't produce pride—here's our problem in Corinth. Godly wisdom doesn't produce pride. It actually produces humility, because we recognize that this isn't “my wisdom.” God has shown me this.

Let's keep going on here.

**14** *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.* **15** *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.*

What a powerful statement! It's a wisdom that actually has, at its core, the reasoning of

Satan and the demons.

Now we go on. He says:

**16** *For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

Does that sound familiar to you? Does that sound somehow like the world that you and I are part of today? *Confusion, every evil thing, self-seeking?*

But he goes on to say, **verse 17**:

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure,—*

There's no evil motive in it. There's no hidden idea behind it. There's no—somebody trying to use something to manipulate someone else. It's *pure*, very genuine. It starts that way.

**17** (It's) *—then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

We live in a world ruled by Satan and his minions, and, in that world, “worldly wisdom” seems to succeed. But ultimately those who try to live by that standard are going to find that it's empty and worthless.

All right, let's go a little further here.

[**1 Corinthians 2:6**] (He says:) *...we speak wisdom among those who are mature, —*

Now again, I want to—we'll look at that word in a moment, but there's a couple of other things that we need to see as we lead up to this.

[54:01]

*Barclay* puts it this way, and I want to quote him, and look at a couple of the words that are used here. He says:

This passage introduces to us a distinction between different kinds of Christian instruction and different stages of the Christian life. In the early Church there was a quite clear distinction between two kinds of instruction. There was what is called *kérygma*.

That's the word that you see up here [on the screen], which primarily means “preaching.”

*Kérygma* means “a herald's announcement from a king,” —

A king sent a herald out with a message, and he proclaims that particular message.

—[and] this was the plain announcement of the basic facts of Christianity—the announcement of the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and His coming again.

This is what was called *didaché*. *Didaché* means “teaching.” This was the explanation of the meaning of the facts which had already been announced.

So, we have—these things are announced—*kérygma*, and then we have *didaché*, which means “teaching.” It’s sometimes translated “doctrine.”

Obviously, it is a second stage for those who have already received the *kerygma*.  
(the preaching)

So, we have different levels here, just as we have in the Church today. We preach a message. We announce it to the world. We spread the gospel message out there. Now to those who are willing to respond to that, then we move to another level, the teaching more deeply of: “What does God expect of us?”

We go on. *Barclay* continues:

This is what Paul is getting at here. So far he’s been talking about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But he goes on to say, “We do not stop there.” Christian instruction goes on to teach, not only the facts, but the meaning of the facts. Paul says that this is done amongst those who are *téleiois*, who are mature—adult. Sometimes the *King James Version* translates this word as “perfect.”

And that can give the wrong sense of it because we think of “perfect” as something that has no flaw whatsoever. That’s not really the sense of what we’re talking about here. The term has a sense of “maturity.”

Now, he goes on to say:

“Perfection” is certainly one of its meanings, but it is not appropriate here. *Téleiois* has a physical sense. It describes an animal, or a person, who has reached the height of his physical development. It has a mental sense. Pythagoras divided his disciples into those who were babes and those who were “*teleioin*.” That is to say, it describes a person who is a “mature” student. That is the sense in which Paul uses it here.

He says, “Out of the streets, and to those who have just newly come into the Church, we talk about the basic elements of Christianity; but when a person has a little more maturity we give them deeper teaching about what these basic facts mean.” It is not that Paul is hinting at a kind of caste distinction between Christians; it is a difference of the stages at which they are. The tragedy so often is that people are content to remain at the elementary stage when they should be going on strenuously to think things out for themselves.

[57:36]

So Paul talks about how we need to go beyond just that level of the first announcement.

We need to understand more. We need to be “mature.” So, he tells us that:

**[1 Corinthians 2:7]** ... *we speak (verse 7) the wisdom of God (which we just read in James 3:17) in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*

Now, we'll finish up today looking at this particular verse. Wisdom is something that has long been prized. It's something that man has understood that, as humans, we need wisdom. Just knowledge by itself isn't enough. We need to know how to apply it. And, in our world today, people in general see wisdom as coming from three basic sources—I guess we could call three “wisdom traditions.”

1. The first is that wisdom lives in each person. It resides inside of you. This is a part of what we would find, for example, in many of the Eastern religions. We would find that the wisdom there comes from stopping and thinking, being quiet and meditating and letting yourself come up with the answers that are needed. Of course, there are some problems with that, that you and I would see, but that is a source that many seem to turn to.
2. The second is that wisdom is discovered by human reasoning. This would take us to the tradition of the Greeks and the Romans, and, even in the early days of our own country, there was this neoclassicism that turned back to understanding Plato, and Aristotle, and Socrates, and if we just use our human wisdom, we can come up with the answers. We can reason our way through. We have the power as humans to do this. This is fundamental to what we call the “scientific approach.”
3. But there's another source of wisdom that mankind as a whole ignores, one that we see, that true wisdom is revealed by God. That God alone has the true wisdom, and He shares that with those who recognize His supremacy in their lives.

[59:54]

Consider a couple of passages that, again—one we've referred to, but one that we know about, as well.

**Psalms 111 verse 10.** It tells us:

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;  
A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.  
His praise endures forever.*

We referred earlier to **Proverbs chapter 9** and **verse 10**, which tells us that

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

For you and for me, our ability to understand true godly wisdom begins with that sense of awe for God. Instead of being in awe of our own human reasoning, or in awe of what we as humans can discover, we recognize that those two are very flawed. But God is not. We begin with that understanding of God and who He is and the awe that we have toward Him. And therefore, when He tells us what we should do—what the right standards are, what the wrong standards are—we begin with that as our foundation. And true wisdom can grow from that.

Now he tells us that again—let’s again look at our verse:

**[1 Corinthians 2:7]** ... *we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery (Wow!), the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*

Just briefly to understand, when the Bible uses the term “mystery,” it’s not using it the way humans normally use that term. When we talk about mysteries today, we talk about something that really can’t even be understood. In fact, it’s a religious term. Roman Catholicism uses the term quite commonly. They talk about—for example, the most common usage would be: “the mystery of the Trinity,” which basically means, “You can’t understand it, but we believe it anyway.” You might be surprised to know that actually in Roman Catholicism there are 15 biblical truths that are described as “mysteries.” You just have to accept them.

[1:02:04]

Well, that’s not the way the term is used in Scripture. The way the term is used in Scripture means “something that you don’t know until it’s revealed to you. But once it’s revealed, you do understand.”

I think one of the very best examples of that is our understanding of the Holy Days and what they mean—that the Holy Days reveal God’s plan of salvation. Now many of you who are watching this will remember a time in your life when you didn’t know what the Holy Days meant. In fact, if you were like me, from my background, I didn’t even know they existed. I didn’t know what they were. If someone had spoken to me about the Day of Atonement or the Feast of Trumpets or the Feast of Tabernacles: “I’ve no idea what you’re talking about.”

But, when you begin to understand those things and the meaning of those days becomes clear, it’s like a curtain rises. It’s like a light comes on. And you see all of what life is about in a very different way. It’s not something you have to come back and continually remind yourself—I mean, it’s important, yes, [that] we remind ourselves by going through those Holy Days every year. We’re reminded, and we learn more as time goes by. But it’s not like, you know, by November you’ve forgotten what the Holy Days mean. No, the “mystery” is revealed to you, and that’s the way God uses this.

He says, “*We speak* the mystery of God, a *wisdom* from God that is *hidden* from the world, but once it's revealed, you and I can live by it. He shared that with us.” And he says *God* has *ordained* this, and as he says, *for our glory*.

Oh, you and I don't have glory today because of the wisdom of God that's given to us. But God has a bigger plan in mind. He plans to share His glory with us for eternity, and, in His incredible wisdom, that's what we can look forward to.

Well, we're going to have to stop there. We've used up our time for today, so we'll take a break, and in class number 4, we will pick up in **2 Corinthians 2** and **verse 8**. Thanks for joining us.

[1:04:19]