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A1145 – November 6, 2011 – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
The Gospel IS A Demonstration Of The Spirit's Power

With a week off we want to come back and review the argument Paul is building in 1 Cor 1:17-31, then we want to show the practical outworking of evangelism/apologetics, which are really the same thing. There's no difference between proclaiming the gospel and defending the gospel, they go together, they're part and parcel of a dialogue that should occur between Christians and non-Christians. So today we want to show you how to proclaim the gospel on the streets.

The number one place the gospel is to be preached is in the streets, by you, not in the pulpit by me. I preach the gospel from the pulpit but this is secondary to the training of believers from the pulpit which the NT teaches is the primary responsibility inside the Church, the training of believers so they can go out on the streets and defend the gospel. So the preaching of the gospel is primarily to be done outside the walls of this building by you and by me; it is an individual responsibility of all Christians, and we should always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us. Now this isn't ramming, cramming and jamming the gospel down people's throats, the Scriptures say be ready to give an answer. And you don't give an answer when there's not a question. So the readiness to give an answer presupposes that someone has a question. Why might someone come with a question? Because something in our lives is so different from their lives that they come with a question. So when you live the Christian life, really live it out in all its aspects in every area of life, you begin to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, thoughts about politics, economics, science, archaeology, business, etc...then you will look very different from the world and if someone asks you the reason why you are so different then you are to be ready to give a defense. But if no one sees a difference then they won't be coming with a question. But assuming you are different the issue becomes how do I give that defense?

How do I proclaim the gospel to a person who asks me a reason for why I live my life the way I do?

But to get to this application you have to follow Paul's argument that leads up to 2:1-5. There were problems at Corinth and we have studied very carefully the background of these problems that were reported to Paul by the people out of Chloe's house. The bottom line of the problems is they had accommodated to the surrounding cultures methods of speaking, we'd say the form of proclamation and to the cultures methods of knowing, we'd say the content of proclamation. How should we proclaim the gospel and when we do what should we say? These two fundamental issues in proclaiming the gospel are indicated in 1:17 by the phrase "cleverness of speech" which in the original is "wise words" or "wise speech." The two go together, they're both part of Greek thought, but for teaching purposes we've divided them in two. The "word" or "speech" aspect is Greek sophistry and the wisdom aspect is Greek philosophy. Further on in the chapter we might add Jewish tradition but it was no different than Greek philosophy in its basic presuppositions. Jewish tradition of the 1st century had been Hellenized, that is, it had been heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. They had borrowed the principle of Being from Plato and imposed it upon the God of Moses so that the Impersonal Being of Plato was identified with the "I AM" of Moses. So Paul boils it down to two problems whether you were Greek and influenced by Greek philosophy or Jewish and influenced by Greek philosophy, it was all the same thing and the two particular issues were Greek sophistry and Greek philosophy. So Paul sets out to utterly destroy them both. Nothing Greek has any validity when it comes to proclaiming the gospel.

So let's review these two problems to make sure we have a handle on what we're dealing with. The first problem, Greek sophistry, is a manner of speaking the gospel, "How should the gospel be proclaimed?" It was reported to Paul that the Corinthians had divided into four factions and this betrayed that they were accommodating to the fleshly method of speech called sophistry, which was considered among the Greeks a superior method of speaking. Sophistry was a persuasive, rhetoric device that allowed the trained sophist to convince others of his views. On the surface, to the weak minded and gullible his arguments were plausible, but if one were to examine his arguments he would find they had no substance. Paul condemns this manner of proclaiming the gospel in verse 17 by saying it made the cross of

Christ void. And we take it that what Paul means is that it made the gospel void of saving power, that when presented in this fleshly way it could not result in salvation because it made men's faith rest on human sophistry rather than God's power. The gospel is not sophistry and the gospel does not need the help of slick human techniques in order to be effective. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

The second problem, also indicated in the original text of verse 17, is Greek philosophy, a method of knowing and reasoning in gospel presentations, "Where should we start when we proclaim the gospel?" "What is the proper starting point for knowing?" Should we start with human reason, human arguments? Or should we start with divine revelation? Paul says in verse 18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Now what is Paul saying? He's saying that if you start with human reason and try to take someone to the cross they will interpret the cross as foolishness, as a joke, as absurd. And the reason is because human reason is operating under the auspices of the flesh, it's a sinful use of human reason and it's this sinful use of human reason that God will finally set out to totally destroy. Verse 20, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." What Paul is saying there is that God gave the two branches of the Adamic human race, both Jew and Greek, time to try and answer all the great questions of life; Who am I? What is the universe? Where did the universe come from? What is the purpose and meaning of life? And neither Greek philosopher nor Jewish sage was able to answer these questions because they started with human reason as autonomous, that is, as operating independent of God's revelation. And it pleased God that they did not find Him out through the autonomous use of human reason such that through the message of the cross He would save those who believe. Verse 22, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness." He says in effect that no one ever sought for God, in fact, they sought for God replacements. They worship, but they do not worship God, they worship signs and they worship

wisdom but they did not worship God, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. So as it were in the sinfulness of men's hearts they did crucify Him and this message - this crucified Savior hanging on a tree, taking upon Himself the sin of the whole world, such that He who had no sin had our sin imputed to Himself in a substitutionary blood atonement. This message was misinterpreted by Jews as an offensive thing, as if Jesus was a criminal receiving what he rightly deserved and to the Gentiles as an absurd thing to glory in, an absurd thing to preach. Yet that is what Paul preached and in verse 24 this Christ was understood by "those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks," as "the power of God and the wisdom of God." But that understanding can only occur when God calls through the message of the cross and works to submit our human reason to God's revelation. It's not a work of coercion or force, don't misunderstand; when we believe we want to believe, but this is because in a mysterious way God the Spirit works to bring us to use our reason aright. I don't claim to know how God does this, how He makes the unwilling willing and the unable able, but that He does is evident from Scripture; so there is a genuine human response of belief in the gospel. Verse 25, "Because" or "That the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." He says, let me demonstrate how great God is and how tiny man is. He says, "Consider," verse 26, "your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," he says God did not call many people to be Christians who were of the upper, elite, intellectual class of people. Most Christians are average people, common people. Yet if the gospel was in accordance with the human reasoning of the intellectually elite then surely there would be many from that class that were Christians. Yet everywhere Paul went and everywhere through church history that the gospel has gone it has been the common people who far outnumbered those of the upper class of people. Not that God did not call some from the upper class, but usually He has called those from the common class. And what this demonstrates or proves is that the gospel is not according to autonomous human reason but rather a demonstration of the power of God. Verse 27, "but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are," that is He chose a method and a message that was completely out of accord with man's methods and man's ideas and He did that to embarrass them, to show them how foolish

they really are, it will be quite embarrassing to have developed all of this philosophy and tradition and yet when it is all on the table there is not a single answer for life, there is not a single answer for the origin of the universe or the purpose of man or even the nature of man, all the human wisdom compiled amounts to nothing. But God did this in verse 29 “so that no man may boast before God.” Because if human wisdom could reach God as it’s ultimate conclusion then such men of wisdom could boast before God. But God has shut up all in disobedience that they remain under His wrath. Therefore verse 30 if anyone is going to be “in Christ then it must be God’s doing by which He is there. And such Paul states, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and justification and sanctification and glorification,” the whole salvation package. Verse 31, “so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.” Finally, back of our salvation is the plan of God. We are ultimately in Christ because of the plan of God, it is His doing. Now that does not nullify the human response of faith, a man must believe, this we equally affirm. But further back behind man believing is God’s plan. You can’t say that human faith is outside of the plan of God because then human faith would be devoid of meaning. Why is that? Because all things have meaning only as they are in the God’s plan. God is the source of meaning. And if it is claimed that something is outside of God’s plan then who would supply the meaning? Faith is a part of the plan of God and gets its meaning from the plan of God. In the plan of God it is a human responsibility, a genuine human choice. But back of man’s faith is God’s plan. Now when we say this do not slip into the pagan notion of causation that somehow man’s faith is a robotic response to God’s plan. God’s plan is not an impersonal causation but a personal one, it finds no identity in anything inside of creation and we are not justified in taking our understanding of causation from within the created order and imposing that upon Him. As Isaiah says, His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. God has ways of accomplishing things that are unlike our ways. So this is by no means fatalism, fatalism is paganism. Personal causation is Christianity. But you will say to me explain it to me and I will respond as the apostle Paul, “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” God is incomprehensible to the finite human mind; the finite cannot encase the infinite. And bold is the man who tries to encase the infinite; to try and bring you and Him onto the same level and discuss things as if you are equals. God has no equals. God is alone and distinct from

His creatures; He is not a magnified version of us. Whatever you do with verse 30 you must say God is back of all and that the fact that God is back of all is what leads to the conclusion of verse 31, that there is only one location for boasting, boasting in the LORD. All human reasoning is set aside as being the ultimate cause that puts us in Christ Jesus. We did not come to the choice to believe in Christ of our own accord.

Now for 2:1, Paul continues, **And when I came to you , brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.”** That is, I did not come to you with Greek sophistry or Greek philosophy to try and win you to Christ. That was not how I proclaimed the gospel of God! And yet both Catholic and Protestant evangelists/apologists still depend on Greek philosophy in their defense of the faith. In fact it is the most popular way of defending the faith down to this very hour. Men like Josh McDowell, Norm Geisler, Dinesh D’Souza and to a lesser degree men like Ravi Zacharias, C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, all used what is known as the classical or traditional method of apologetics, which is to start with human reason and logic as something shared in common between believers and unbelievers. Come, let us reason together we are told and I will show you how your human reason and logic leads to Jesus Christ, how Christianity makes so much better sense of the data than paganism by depending upon paganism. What Paul is saying is that we do not share human reason and logic in common with unbelievers because human reason is contaminated by sin. That’s what these apologists never take into account. And the reason they never take it into account is because their theology is contaminated by paganism. In particular the pagan philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Medieval theology borrowed early on from Platonism and later on borrowed from Aristotle. It was melded together with the Bible by the Roman Catholic scholar Thomas Aquinas and brought into Protestantism by Joseph Butler and today it is present in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. So we might say upon reflection that modern classical apologists got it from Thomas Aquinas who got it from Plato and Aristotle who got it from Eve who got it from the Devil. We could trace it all the way back to the garden when Eve thought that by an independent use of her human reason she could determine what was true about that tree in the garden. She could do nothing of the sort. God determines the meaning of every tree and of all things in the universe. But Aquinas bought into this reasoning which he got from Plato and Aristotle, which are really not much

different other than one starts with the rational and the other with the empirical. They both supposed that all is One, Monism. Even though Plato had a dualism it was a dualism that on one end was non-being and on the other being, the individual, us, we are part of non-being. What happens when Socrates drinks of the hemlock cup, what happens to Socrates, does Socrates cease to exist? No, says Plato because Socrates, the true Socrates is Socrates' mind and the mind is part of Being which is eternal, so the mind of man is part of ultimate Being, in essence the mind of man is God. So Aristotle came along and he said, but what is the relationship between Being and non-Being. This dualism and his answer was the form-matter scheme, he decides there is a scale of being between the two. It's really not at all different from Plato in anything fundamental, the mind is still part of the divine. And so Aquinas came along and he loved Aristotle and so he developed a theology that God is this ultimate One. He identified the God of the Bible with the ultimate One of Aristotle. But the problem with this is that the mind of man is part of the ultimate One, it partakes of the divine in Aquinas' theology and so if the mind of man is divine then its reasoning capacities are intact, it can reason properly, without the dictates of the flesh. And that is the very thing Paul is arguing against. So from Aquinas on down to our own day it has come and been popularized in Catholic circles by Dinesh D'Souza and in Protestant circles by Josh McDowell among others. But Aquinas is the key historically. His identification of the Being of Plato and the Form of Aristotle with the God of the Bible, thus lifting the human intellect into the divine and denying the Creator-creature distinction is what has led to the use of human reason independent of divine revelation. And so the mind is capable of reasoning properly to an extent. And Aquinas said I make room for faith because when human reason comes to its end and can go no further then we resort to faith in divine revelation. So his procedure was to start by appealing to human reason to acquire true knowledge independent of God and when human reason could go no further then we must resort to faith in divine revelation to finish what was lacking. In essence Plato said the same thing, he said the mind could go so far and it could acquire truth but at some point we might have to turn to the myths of the gods and goddesses to perhaps find out something beyond this, things which no one can really know for sure and therefore are to be taken on faith. This is the pagan notion of faith, something divorced from knowledge, something that is non-rational and non-empirical, something that can't be understood or measured by human senses. The Bible teaches the opposite, the Bible teaches that the word of God is

more certain than anything your senses have ever measured or anything you have ever experienced. Faith is to trust He whose word is infinitely more certain than any empirical or rational analysis. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe? Why? Because the word of God on any subject is more certain than anything you have ever seen. But we like to trust our senses, that is, we like to put our trust in ourselves. Empiricism and rationalism are the height of idolatry; they are self-trust, they are self-worship. If I must see to believe then my faith is in my sight, if I must exhaustively understand in order to believe then that is the most severest form of idolatry.

Now to clarify how this grievous error is done over and over and over we want to give some examples of how it is done in modern times. This will reflect the same kinds of things the Corinthians were doing in gospel presentations. Many of these arguments for the existence of God come from Aquinas. And his method is part and parcel in all of them. We'll start with the cosmological argument for the existence of God. The first thing that the classical method seeks to establish is the existence of God by means of human reason. Once that is established the second thing it seeks to do is build a bridge to the cross of Christ by faith. This is the bridge building technique and we'll contrast this with another method later where grand canyons are formed. But the bridge building technique is I get you to believe in God by appealing to your human reason and logic and then, once I convince you that on your own terms God is there then I bring in Scripture and try to lead you to faith in Christ. All classical apologists think you can do this. So the first step is to convince people of the existence of God because when they talk to their unbelieving friend the unbeliever says, "Well, it's just not clear to me that God exists," and so the believer says to himself, "Hmm, my friend is honest, he doesn't see God, so then I must prove to this person that God does exist. I wonder what arguments there are for God's existence that I might use to convince him?" And he will find there are about 11 different arguments. We won't go through all of them but we will show a few to show the classical approach. Here's the Cosmological argument for the existence of God.

1. Everything that exists has a cause of its existence.
2. The universe exists.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.
4. That cause is God

You are sitting with your friend and you say, you know, everything that exists has a cause of its existence. And we all agree that the universe exists, so don't you see that implies that the universe must have a cause of its existence? I tell you that God is the only adequate cause. God caused the universe. Now it may sound fine on the surface, but it's a piece of sophistry because when we look closer what do we see in step 1 of this argument? What word do we see that causes a problem? Notice the universal term "everything," "everything that exists has a cause," so in the argument you have used a universal and you always want to be looking and listening for universals, all things evolve, everybody knows that, everything operates according to this law, etc...Oh really, hmm, that's interesting. Universals are key words to listen to in discussions. So think what you have set up in verse 1 - you've set up a universal category that applies to all things. So what does your thinking non-Christian friend then do? He simply plugs God into step 2. If God exists then God has a cause of His existence and asks you, "What caused God?" Do you see how he just aced you? In fact you gave him the logic that he then turned around and used against you to defeat you. So there's a danger of using this kind of argument that appeals to human reason because inevitably you end up setting up a universal that applies to God and man in the same way. Oops, that's not what you wanted to do, but that's what you did and then they turned your logic around on you and proved the very opposite thing you were trying to prove. They've demolished your bridge building. You haven't challenged him at all with the gospel. So the cosmological bridge crumbles.

Let's try another one; this one is popularly known as the Design argument for the existence of God.

1. All design has a designer.
2. Nature manifests design.
3. Therefore, nature has a designer.
4. That designer is God.

Now that's essentially the argument of the people in the Intelligent Design movement. And a smart unbeliever could dismantle this one the same way he dismantled the cosmological argument, by plugging God in at step 2 and asking you, "Who designed God." But let's take it another route to show there

are multiple ways unbelievers can get around these arguments and they end up getting us in a bind. What's the counter argument? That there is mal-design in nature. What do you mean by mal-design? Things that are not in their optimal condition, they could be improved? Is there mal-design in nature? Sure there is. Scientists have pointed out a variety of things that have room for improvement. So therefore a non-Christian presented with this argument might ask you, how do you Christians account for mal-design in nature if you're God is so perfect? If He were so perfect why didn't He create everything perfect? And then he's aced you once more. There's an answer to that. He did create everything perfect but man sinned and that introduced the mal-design, but the point is that you don't set up the argument this way; this is not how you build a bridge to God. You don't start with design and move to designer because there is also mal-design and now you have to answer where that came from. So it's not a full-proof argument by any means. Every time you point to some design in nature the unbeliever simply points to some mal-design and you go nowhere. So you haven't preached the gospel. The design bridge crumbles.

Let's look at one more; this will be the last one, this one is called the personal experience argument for the existence of God.

1. Personal experience is a source of knowledge.
2. My personal experience verifies what is knowledge for me.
3. My knowledge gained from experience proves that Christ is my Savior.

Or, put shortly, I had an experience, that experience proves to me that my faith is true. Now this is the subjective argument and this is what most people appeal to when they don't know what else to say. It's not anything you'll ever see in the Bible. In fact, none of these arguments are in the Bible. What's the problem with this argument? How do you prove that your independent private experience is valid at large in the world of reality? How do you distinguish Christ in the heart from heart...burn? Mormon's do the same thing, the evidence that Mormonism is true is what? I had a burning in my bosom. How do you know that you haven't had an illusion? How do you move from subjective experience to fact? If you try this argument you have not preached the gospel. And as you can see it can be easily checkmated by an intelligent unbeliever. You cannot move from an experience to the Christ

of the Bible. All you can really say is that you have interpreted a personal experience as being Christ, but you cannot objectively make that assertion. Finally all that can be said is that you had an experience. Thus, the *personal experience* bridge crumbles.

Now do you see how all these arguments try to get around the work of the Holy Spirit? You started with human reason and never even made it to the Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit doesn't look down at your argument and say, now boy, that is a really good argument, why didn't I think of that, I therefore baptize your human argument and I'm going to use your argument to lead people to Christ. He never does that. Why doesn't He do that? Because our ideas are fleshly. Instead He uses His own ideas and His idea is the word of God. He uses the word of God to bring people to faith in Christ. He does not appeal to an independent argument based on fleshly human reasoning to build a bridge to Himself; He starts by digging a grand canyon. So this is the other apologetic method and its called the presuppositional or authoritarian approach, the approach of Christ, Paul and in modern times Cornelius Van Til and Greg Bahnsen. I like to call it the authoritarian approach because it means essentially that we are accepting God's word on the basis of His authority not our own. So here, rather than trying to build a bridge from unbelief over to Christ by the use of human reason what you are doing is trying to build a grand canyon between the unbeliever and Christ to show there is a wide gulf between him and Christ. Christ is over here and you are way over there. So you're trying to show that unbelief is very much different than Christianity, they are not the same. The traditional approach is saying there is not much difference between unbelief and Christianity, all they need is a little more data and a few more steps in the logic chain and then they will reach Jesus. The presuppositional view is saying we do not share the same interpretation of data with unbelievers and we do not share the same use of reason and logic with unbelievers. The only thing we share in common with unbelievers is the fact that we are made in the image of God and we are responsible creatures, responsible to God and that we are rebels against God and He is our judge but He has met all His requirements in Christ.

And therefore the presuppositional approach says we start with Scripture and we present everything in terms of Scripture. We don't ever appeal to anything outside of Scripture as verification. We can talk about anything with our unbelieving friend; we can talk about ethics, we can talk about

economics, we can talk about politics, we can talk about architecture, the subject matter doesn't matter, but one thing we must decide never to do is talk about any subject as independent from God. We should never talk about politics as if God doesn't have anything to say about politics. That is not permitted. God has spoken to every area of life and every area of life equally, that is, with equal authority, so no area of life can ever, or should ever, be spoken of as if it is some kind of thing floating out there about which God has said nothing, and about which all believers and unbelievers can agree. We don't agree with unbelievers about anything.

We do not agree on the facts of history and we do not agree that $1 + 1 = 2$. This is not shared knowledge between believers and unbelievers. Sure we can all say $1 + 1 = 2$ but for us to say that we know these things and they know these things is to say that both we and they know these things independently of God and His revelation. Paul simply would not have accepted this. The reason is that Paul was an evangelist, he had to win people to Jesus Christ, and if you are going to start by saying that the non-Christian has genuine knowledge, knowledge that he has on some principle, independently of Scripture, then the gospel is reduced to simply additional information. Jesus becomes just an addition alongside all your other authorities; the doctor, the lawyer, the architect and Jesus, your religious guru. If Jesus is not presented as above all other authorities you have not preached the gospel. This is an absolutely elementary point. This is fundamental. Everything else is wrapped up in this point. If the non-Christian is not challenged at every point of his thinking then no challenge has been given!

So, for example, if you permit the non-believer to claim the knowledge that $1 + 1 = 2$. Oh yes, he can say that $1 + 1 = 2$, but as far as this 1 unit is concerned, what sustains the independence of this unit? What holds two units of 1 together in 2 so that 2 stays the same such that 2 is still 2 tomorrow? Why doesn't 2 turn into 3? If everything is evolving then surely some day 2 will turn into 3. How can I rely on the stability of these numbers so I can deduce rigorous mathematical formulas to know how the universe is structured? Once you grant that an unbeliever, on his own principle of autonomy, came to this knowledge of $1 + 1 = 2$ independent of God and His revelation you have already compromised the gospel. Paul says you can never do this! And 1 Cor 2:2 is where Paul says you can never do this. Up to this point has all been introduction to this elementary point. If you want to

challenge people with the gospel you must challenge them at every point of their proclaimed knowledge as Paul did. Starting in verse 1, **And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.** That is, I didn't come with Greek sophistry and I didn't come with Greek philosophy. In modern parlance we'd say, I didn't come with the cosmological argument or the design argument or the experiential argument and try to build a bridge from your human reason to Jesus Christ. Verse 2, **For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** Now look at that, the subject is what? **knowledge.** How do I know anything at all? Paul says I start with Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Do you see how he's rejecting the starting point of human arguments as if the human mind can know anything aright independently from Christ? He says, I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. So let's unfold this statement. We want to understand that Paul is not saying that he ran around and just told Jesus stories. Jesus stories are just facts and can be interpreted however a person wants if left outside of the Christian worldview. Jesus must be presented inside the Christian worldview so that the facts are given an interpretation in light of the whole Christian story. This should not be strange to your ears. We always say that a text taken out of context is just a pre-text. It has no meaning at-all until taken in context. So the same holds for an event, an event taken out of context can be taken many different ways. How do we know what an event means? How do we know what Christ and Him crucified means? The Jews said it was foolish, the Greeks said it was absurd, they gave their interpretations. The Christians said it was the wisdom of God. So you see you cannot just present an isolated gospel unless you want to leave the meaning up to the hearer. You must present it in the context of the whole Christian story, that way the fact is presented along with its prescribed meaning, the meaning ascribed by God.

So notice how he says, **I determined** to use this approach. The verb **determined** means to come to a conclusion after thinking about it. It's looking at the point when the decision was made but it implies that there was a thinking process that Paul went through to come to this determination. When did Paul come to this determination? Some commentators say he came to this determination after Athens, that up the road at Athens he had tried to use the approach of Greek philosophy at Mars Hill and he failed. For that there is no evidence. I wonder how those converted by the occasion would

interpret the claim of failure. Paul's argument at Athens is so completely contrary to the argument of Greek philosophy! Paul did not present God as the Being of Plato or the Form of Aristotle but as the Personal Creator to whom all men are responsible and must give an answer to God because God has sent a man, Christ Jesus who has been crucified but God has raised Him as Judge of all men! That is to preach Christ and Him crucified. And further, his presentation at Athens is no different than His presentation at Lystra in Acts 14 or Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. Paul, whenever he made this determination, made it before any of his missionary journeys. And the conclusion he came to was that when I go to a city **I determine to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.** And when he went to Corinth, as verse 1 recounts; he says I made a conscious effort not to use Greek sophistry, I made a conscious effort not to use Greek philosophy when I proclaimed to you the gospel. Instead, I consciously determined to know nothing among you, that means the entire time Paul was in Corinth, over a year and a half Paul says, **I made the conscious determination not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** So what does it mean to not know anything except Christ and Him crucified? It means what I've been telling you it means. Paul never made a claim to know anything apart from divine revelation. Paul never claimed to know facts of history apart from divine revelation. Paul never claimed to know facts of mathematics apart from divine revelation. Paul never claimed to know facts of law apart from divine revelation. Everything Paul claimed to know he claimed to know only as its place in the plan of God. To claim otherwise would be to claim that human reason was sufficient -independent from divine revelation, that human reason could take us so far, and we need only add faith in Jesus to our already substantiated knowledge gained by human reason, to add Jesus to the pantheon of our other gods. But this is not the gospel. And Paul was sent to preach the gospel.

Notice, verse 3, **I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling**, what's he saying there? In and of myself I am inadequate. Now this was repulsive to the Greeks. The Greeks were impressed if you came in just the opposite way; with strength and confidence and poise. So for a person to come in weakness and fear and in trembling was a sign of inadequacy. But that's the whole point. Paul is saying I am inadequate. Why? Because he didn't want anyone's faith to rest on him, he didn't want everyone so impressed with him that they were really putting their faith in him such that

they could say, "I am of Paul!" as some of them were indeed doing. Yet Paul did not come that way. Paul did not come with the impressive Greek methods of the day. He put himself out of the way and put the revelation of God in the limelight at all times, determining to know nothing, not even how toilet paper is manufactured, apart from divine revelation and how its meaning depended upon Christ. Now why did Paul do this? Because if he didn't do this then there is no meaning, there is no knowledge. Starting with the world they have no answers, no not one. They don't know where we came from, why we are here, where we are going, they don't even know who we are. The world has no answers at all. And that is why Paul says elsewhere, but in the same vein, all the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hidden where? In Christ, how many of them? All of them. Lets put this finitely before us. Say there are 25 trillion particles of wisdom and knowledge. What is the meaning of them? There is no meaning apart from Christ. No meaning at all because every one of those 25 trillion particles has meaning and becomes knowledge only as Christ dictates the meaning. That is what Paul is saying. And that is precisely why Paul says in another place that it is the Christian's duty to take every thought captive to the obedience of Chris, not some thoughts, every thought. What do you mean by that Paul? He means that when you are confronted by a fact, any fact and all facts, it is your duty to interpret that fact in terms of what God has said about that fact. And if you don't and you proceed along some principle within yourself then you are in rebellion against Christ, while professing to be wise in your own estimation, you are a fool. Let us therefore never interpret any fact in terms of some other principle besides the living Christ. We must receive on the authority of Christ, every fact and interpretation of fact as given by Christ, that is, by the eyes of divine revelation, if we are to know any fact aright at all and to have wisdom. Otherwise room is left for boasting and Paul would have none of it.

Let me conclude with a compendium of the gospel as Paul preached it at Lystra and Iconium and Athens and how we may infer he preached it at Corinth. You will find no argument for the existence of God, you will find no appeal to fleshly human reasoning, you will find every man as interpreted by Paul inside the confines of divine revelation as the substance of the gospel which called men to faith in Christ. "Men, we are of the same nature as you, and we preach the gospel to you that you should turn from the vanities of dead idols to the living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. ¹⁶"In the generations gone by He permitted all

the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness, that you would seek God, if perhaps you might grope for Him and find Him, though He is right in front of you all the time, and He supplies everything that supports your life all the time, therefore you ought not to think of God as something conjured up in the heart of man, God made you. And God graciously overlooked your ignorance, but now He is declaring to all men everywhere that they should repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. As you who believed. Christ Jesus it is He. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” That is what it is to preach the gospel and that is what I hope you will do, for that message is the power of God unto salvation, a message of God’s grace and not of man’s works, lest any man may boast in any other than the LORD.

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