

If You Know the Same Things, You Will Come to the Same Conclusions!

- “Mind” (νοῦ, **noi**) refers to the general principles and the information that is in the mind. “Mind” is a reference here to the condition of the mind.
- “Thought” or “opinion, judgment” (γνώμη, **gnome**) refers to the special application of the general principles. This refers to the decisions that come from the mind.

The distinction between “mind” and “thought” is not the difference between “theory” and “practical”, but between “understanding the information” and “making a judgment in order to form an opinion.”

If the people were taught the same information then the people would judge the questions they have sent to Paul from the same viewpoint and formulate their opinions.

1:11

Chloe’s household likely refers to her domestic servants (both slave and former slaves called freedmen) and not to the church that met in her house. (Support for this view comes from Rogers Linguistic Key, 1982; Zondervan’s Background Commentary, 2002; Vincent’s Word Studies in Greek, 1886). These servants would have traveled back and forth from Corinth and Ephesus. Chloe may have been from Ephesus in Asia, but had settled in Corinth. Those listed in 1 Cor. 16:15-17 – Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus – are members of the Corinthian church who carried an official letter to Paul. 1 Cor. 16:15 refers to “the household of Stephanas” in Corinth. So, the church of Corinth was having problems settling on the answers to some questions of both doctrine/theology and application/lifestyle. The official letter did not reveal the problem, but “members of Chloe’s household” (servants) who had returned to Ephesus from Corinth had the inside information that revealed WHY the Corinthian church was having so many problems finding answers to their questions and resolutions to their conflicts.

“Quarrels” is the word ἐριδες (**erides**) from ἐρις (**eris**). This word is often used to refer to division in politics. These are quarrels and hot disputes with emotional flares that develop when rivalries become intolerable. It was the nature of this Greek culture (in Corinth) to follow speakers, politicians, philosophers or teachers with great loyalty. This cultural practice carried over into the church in Corinth and people rallied around their speaker/teacher/philosopher instead of Christ and his Word. Speakers would gain a following when they would cater to the crowds who would then follow a particular unique leader and his unique message or political platform. Paul wanted them to follow Jesus and his word, not men and their presentation.

“informed me” is the word ἐδηλωθη (**edelothe**) from δηλωω (**deloo**) which means “to make clear” and “to make known.” Paul was writing back to the Corinthians to say “it is clear” and “I have been told” and then Paul names the source of his information. He may be saying this because the Corinthian’s official letter to Paul merely asked questions, but did not expose the reason for the difficulties. But, members of the household of Chloe has revealed the problem.

1:12-16

Paul identifies the problem: following leaders and their:

- style of teaching,
- their message,
- their philosophy of life,
- their points of application for a successful life.

Paul points out he wants no “special” following and is glad there are so few that could be distracted by a pseudo mystical experience of having been baptized by Paul.

1:17

Paul regains the direction of the letter with the word “For” and says it is not about baptism, followers, presentation styles, but the message.

This mention of “preaching” and the “gospel” (or, message) introduces first contrast of right and wrong in the Corinthian Church. The Corinthians were not proclaiming the message, but were instead

seeking speakers that could bring them wisdom. The Corinthians did not want to hear something they could believe and be changed. They wanted to hear something they could use and improve their life.

1:17 3756 ου did not 1063 γαρ For 649 απέστειλέ send
1473 με me 5547 χριστός Christ
907 βαπτίζεοντο immerse 235 αλλ' but
2097 ευαγγελίζεσθαι to announce good news 3756 ουκ not
1722 εν in 4678 σοφία wisdom 3056 λόγου of word
2443-3361 ίνα μη lest 2758 κενωθή should be an empty work
3588 ο the 4716 σταυρός cross 3588 του of the
5547 χριστού Christ

Paul’s phrase “Christ...sent me” includes the verb form of the noun **apostolos** αποστολος meaning "sent one"

Interesting point about baptism here is that the message and salvation stand alone without baptism.

Paul did baptize, but he did not make it a requirement for salvation. In fact, it always came after people had heard the message, believed in the Lord and received salvation.

“Preaching the Gospel” is contrasted with “Words of human wisdom”

This introduces a long section (1:17-2:16) where Paul explains the Corinthian problem.

In the next 32 verses Paul will develop this theme and provide correction concerning the contrasting presentation:

- “the message of God’s revelation” (which is Paul’s style), or
- “words of human wisdom” (which is the Corinthian church speakers’ style)

Paul addresses both the:

1. Content of the message, and the,
2. Form of the presentation as will be seen in 1 Cor. 2:1-5. The Greek philosophical, rhetorical style of presentation by the philosophers and wisemen is the Corinthian church’s style of preaching. This has already been a problem that was addressed in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:5; 2:3-6, 13).

The literal phrase is “not in **sophia** (wisdom) of **logos** (word)”

1. **sophia** (wisdom) is the content of the message – the wisdom of men’s reasoning, men’s philosophy, men’s experience, men’s stories, men’s education, etc.
2. **logos** (word) is the form/style of presentation – in this case “logos” (word”) refers to how the **sophia** is presented. This speaks of the rhetorical style the wisdom of men was presented. Was it reason? Was it logic? Was it debate?

Whatever the Corinthian style was used to present the wisdom of men to the church it was in direct contrast to Paul’s message and style referred to in 2:1-5. In fact, Paul’s wisdom, message and style were under direct criticism by the church for not being wisdom, relevant, useful, applicable, intelligent, etc. as is seen in 2:1-5.

But, Paul does have his own **logos** (words) which refers to his own style, his own presentation which is identified in 1:18. Paul’s **logos** is the logos of the cross.

First Corinthians 1:18-25

The division of these verses:

- a) 1:18-25 – the message of the cross (Paul’s text verse – Isaiah 29:14)
- b) 1:26-31 – the people who heard the message (Paul’s text verse – Jeremiah 9:3-24)
- c) 2:1-5 – the person who brought the message
- d) 2:6-16 – what really is spiritual and what really is wisdom? (Paul’s text verse – Isaiah 64:4)

The answer to “**What is really spiritual?**”

- Spiritual here are those with the Holy Spirit or all believers.

The answer to “**What is wisdom?**”

- Wisdom is using the “power” (presence) of the Spirit to see life and the world from the divine perspective. The APPLICATION of real “spirituality” and real “wisdom”:
- The spiritual person with the wisdom of God will be able to embrace values, morals, future plans, priorities and world views that agree with God’s Word, God’s character and are often different and unrecognizable for the natural man using natural wisdom.

The Avenues that Paul uses to prove his point:

- a. the means was the cross.it was simple 1:18-25
- b. the people were the Corinthiansthey were simple 1:26-31
- c. the preacher was Paulhe was simple 2:1-5

Indeed human wisdom is not greater than God’s wisdom.
 But the cross was not even a dispensing of God’s wisdom to men.
 The cross does not count on men receiving the wisdom of God and so become wiser.
 The cross baffles men.
 Men do not receive a higher level of wisdom and so be able to say, “Ah, now I have figured it out.”
 The cross baffles the Jew. The cross baffles the Gentile.
 The cross runs contrary to the wicked and is not the hope of the self-righteous.
 To crucify the messiah or to sacrifice the hope of the world was not a concept in the realm of man.

The Corinthians had tried to move on from the simple message of the cross to something more profound and worthy of their time and reputation.
 Imagine in the great philosophical culture of Greece the challenge of holding to the gospel message.
It was simple. It was unimaginable. So it was unreasonable to the Greek mind which made the gospel foolish.
 The Corinthians had tried to move on from the gospel message as quick as they could and find with in the Christian message something more worthy of their intellect.

- 1:18**
 Two groups in Paul’s division of people:
- a. those who are perishing
 - b. us who are being saved
- Previously established groups of mankind:
- a. the Jew and the Gentile
 - b. the Greek and the Barbarian
 - c. the slave and the free
 - d. Roman citizen and non-citizen
 - e. Male and Female

1:18 [588](#) ο [3056-1063](#) λόγος γαρ For *the* word
[3588](#) ο the one [3588](#) του of the [4716](#) σταυρού cross
[3588](#) τοις to the ones [3303](#) μὲν indeed
[622](#) ἀπολλυμένοις perishing
[3472-1510.2.3](#) μωρία ἐστὶς moronishness
[3588-1161](#) τοις δε but to the ones
[4982](#) σωζομένοις being preserved [1473](#) ἡμῖν to us
[1411](#) δύναμις *the* power [2316](#) θεοῦ of God [1510.2.3](#) ἐστὶ it is

“The **logos** of the cross” has power to save.
 Mixing the wisdom of the world and the logos of men with the cross will empty the cross of power.
 The Gospel in the hands of the Corinthians has lost its power.
 Paul is contrasting power/weakness and folly/wisdom.

- 1:19**
 Isaiah 29:14 – here in 29:1 Ariel (lit. “altar hearth” referring to temple altar)
 is Jerusalem are caught up in an endless cycle meaningless religious activities. Their attitude will put them into a stupor. When the words are read they cannot understand so the revelation of God is reduced by men to simply following rules. Men cannot understand God without God’s presence.
 In Rabbinic style Paul reaches for a text verse to build his argument around.

1:19 [1125-1063](#) γέγραπται γαρ For it has been written
[622](#) ἀπολώ I will destroy [3588](#) τὴν the [4678](#) σοφίαν wisdom
[3588](#) τῶν of the [4680](#) σοφῶν wise [2532](#) καὶ and
[3588](#) τὴν the [4907](#) σύνεσιν understanding
[3588](#) τῶν of the [4908](#) συνετῶν experts
[114](#) ἀθετήσω I will disregard

1:20

Is Paul's open invitation addressed to his now imaginary scholars and wisemen that he will debate?

Wise man = Greeks

Scholar = is "γραμματευσ" which is the Jewish term for the experts in the Law such as the Rabbis and the teachers of the law. This word is not used among the Greeks for their lawyers, etc.

Philosopher = means "debater" and is only used twice in all of Greek writing (here and in Ignatius.)

It is a personal word aimed at the Corinthians who are "debating" Paul.

1:20

[4226](#) που Where is [4680](#) σοφός the wise? [4226](#) που Where is [1122](#) γραμματεύς the scribe [4226](#) που Where is [4804](#) συζητητής the debater [3588](#) του [165-3778](#) αιώνας τούτου of this eon? [3780](#) ουχί Did not [3471](#) εμώρανεν make moronish [3588](#) ο [2316](#) θεός God [3588](#) την the [4678](#) σοφίαν wisdom [3588](#) του [2889-3778](#) κόσμου τούτου of this world

Paul has challenged his opponents:

- a. The Greeks
- b. The Jews
- c. The Corinthians

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the Jews and the Greeks and even the Corinthians?

1:21

How does God make the wisdom of God appear foolish to the world.

Paul begins his argument with a statement all sides can agree on:

"the world did not discover God through a system of wisdom."

Any god discovered by human wisdom will be a creation in the image and understanding of fallen man.

Any god "discovered" by fallen man will reflect:

- Mere human understanding
- Mere human desires and resolutions to our human problems, needs, fears, etc.
- Mere human point of view concerning:
 - Right/wrong
 - Direction for history
 - What is important
 - View of the purpose for life

Explanation:

Distinguish between knowing God exists (Romans 1) and understanding what God is doing (1 Cor. 1:21)

The world knows God exists that is why all cultures are religious and why false religions develop.

Paul is not saying people do not know of God.

Paul is saying once people recognize God though natural means they cannot simply "know"

God or understand his ways and his plans.

After recognizing God's existence it is up to man to pursue God for God's revelation of himself.

As Romans 2:7 says.

In Romans 1:21-28 men fail to do this. Instead they create gods in their own images from their own imaginations. They make gods who think like men think.

"Foolishness of what was preached" refers to the proclamation of that second step (proclaiming the revelation from God) to knowing God (hearing and believing).

"Foolishness of what was preached" is the proclamation and the hearing of his word.

Those who recognize and accept ("believe") the revelation from God are saved.

1:22

Jews want to see a sign something they can physically see and trust in. Their Messiah would manifest physically and change the world. Today's Jew is looking for a natural man who is a political leader to improve their world through a process.

Greeks want to hear something they consider to be wisdom from their own understanding.

Herodotus says, "All Greeks were zealous for every kind of learning."

The Greeks had advanced logic and Sophia (wisdom) to the place that the world was abandoning the gods.

But a preacher is going to present God's revelation.

It is neither a physical manifestation nor is it something that agrees with men's lower, natural reasoning. It is a revelation from God.

Thus, the preacher's message appears to be and is counted as "foolish":

- a. This does not mean it is foolish, illogical, anti-reality, senseless, uneducated, fictional, etc.
- b. It means men in their senses and in their thinking cannot find it. They must hear it from God.

1:23

Crucified Messiah was not the sign the Jews were waiting for.

The two things, "crucified" and "Messiah" cancel each other out similar to "fried ice."

"folly" means something more like "madness" instead of simply an intellectual defect or lack of wisdom.

The Jews did not crucify for public display but they stoned and hung the body for public display. (Dt. 21:23)

"Christ crucified" does not fit the Jewish perspective. Thus Paul's attitude in Gal. 1:13-14 and 3:13.

The Greeks considered Christianity along the same lines as all the other religions that had been dismissed as legends, superstitions. Belief in Jesus was to them as foolish as belief in Zeus or Hercules.

1:24

It seems that God may have made a mistake.

If the Jews want a sign then give them the victorious Messiah

If the Greeks want wisdom then give them some wonderful logic.

But, that would be catering to men's natural abilities and understanding.

That would meet man at his fallen level. This is the level that idols (satan) meets man.

God is beyond man's understanding and plans.

Through the cross God has entered the world of man with a greater plan, a greater nature and a greater life.

If man could understand it, then man would have thought of it and taken action.

The cross of Christ was effective. It has power that transforms lives today.

ROMANS 1:16, "I AM NOT ASHAMED (meaning "embarrassed" by the results or let down by the lack of effect) OF THE GOSPEL!" Paul was confident that the word of God would bring results every time it was proclaimed, understood and believed by a human.

1:25

Do not blunt the power of the message by mixing it with:

- Rituals
- Symbols
- Wisdom
- Self-helps
- Mysticism
- Etc.

Preach the word.

Conclusion is agreeable to all:

God is better on a bad day than men are on a very, very good day.

(Or, what men consider to be a "bad day" for God.)

Point: The Corinthians need to lose the thought that the gospel message is too simple for them.

That attitude simply means they have no idea what they are talking about.

The Corinthians need to stop trying to make church **relevant**.

The Corinthians need to stop tweaking the message to make it **more applicable**.

The Corinthians need to stop adjusting the vocabulary of God's word in order to make their **life better**.

1:26

“Brothers” is the start of a new point in Paul’s writing. It will be a new point but a continuation of his theme. In the eyes of the world and its pursuit of greatness, wisdom and stability the Word of God and the Kingdom of God are not understood.

The world sees all of God and his plan as: Simple message, Simple people, Simple preacher. God’s revelation is not relevant, not applicable and does not address the real issues of daily life. But, the Corinthians are fixing that with power speakers, applicable wisdom and mysticism.

Boasting becomes the new theme:

- a. the Corinthians were boasting one leader verse another
- b. Paul goes to Jeremiah 9:23-24 for his text verse in this second point

“Called” is a reference to their point of salvation.

When they were “called” to receive the offer of salvation none of them were called because they deserved it.

“Called” is from the word “καλεω”. The root word is “καλ” and so our English word “call”.

The word means “to call anyone, to invite, summon”.

Theologically it is used of the Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption.

It does not mean the call or invitation cannot be rejected.

Throughout scripture men have rejected God’s call.

“Not many” is not exclusive but it is limiting (Crispus, Gaius, Stephanus were influential, rich, noble. Meaning there were among them some considered by the world to be wise, influential and noble.

“Human standards” is the word “sarka” or “flesh”. It is the first use of this word by Paul.

They themselves have nothing to boast about in the natural but yet they are judging Paul by this standard. Paul is simply turning it around and applying it to them.

Their only strength is the fact that they accepted God’s call.

“Wise” is “Sophia”

“Influential” (“powerful) is the word for power “dunamis”

Both these terms have already been used.

Jeremiah 9:23 uses two of these but Jeremiah uses “rich” as the third word.

Paul instead chooses to use the word “well born” which refers to born into the upper class of wealth.

There was wealth in Corinth, but few Corinthians were born into the wealth of the noble class.

Gaius Titius Justus was likely of noble birth being one of the original families settled in Corinth by Julius Ceaser. (Rom. 16:23; Acts 18:7). Gaius hosted the church in his house according to Rm. 16:23.

Some of the Corinthian believers were of the upper class by birth: Crispus, Gaius, Erastus, Stephanas

Paul’s point was it did not take special qualifications to receive the call to the gospel.

1:27

1:28

“the things that are not” (μη οντα) There is not a more contemptible expression in Greek thinking that was possible for Paul to use. The lack of “being” was the worse it could be.

“nullify” (καταργεο) is an eschatological term. It means “to put out of action, to make inactive, to reduce to nothing”

1:29

1:30

1:31

