

Title: In the Power of God
Text: 1 Cor 2: 1-5
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Will a sinner believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—truly believe in the heart--by the eloquence or attractiveness of the speaker? Multitudes heard Christ speak audibly yet they did not believe on him. Dare any man think there was a better teacher that ever walked the face of the earth!

But will a sinner believe the god of his imagination—make some religious profession—because of the persuasiveness of the speaker? Yes. That very thing is what the apostle Paul feared most.

1 Corinthians 2: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

You hear me speak of men who I have a deep love for, who I am thankful to God for. The reason why is this: they preached Christ and him crucified to me. They did not go the way of the intellectual or the way of the works religionists. They simply declared Christ and him crucified me according to the scriptures. And the Spirit of God entered in and revealed to my heart the things that God has freely given to me through the sacrifice of his own Son.

It is great love to lay down our lives—to lay aside all our fleshly wisdom—and simply tell sinners what we have heard of the Father. The Lord Jesus said to his apostles:

John 15: 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends...15: Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Proposition: The truth does not need man's wisdom. The testimony of God only needs to be proclaimed. God will quicken whom he will and reveal Christ in whom he will.

If anyone had excellency of speech and intellect it was the apostle Paul. He was brought up in religion—taught by Gamaliel. He had an excellent education in Greek. He could speak on current events and issues of the day. But this was his resolve, he said this,

I. PAUL DESIRED TO PREACH ONLY CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 2: 1: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Why is the gospel called the “testimony of God”. Because it is God's testimony. The gospel is God bearing testimony of his Son.

If someone hears God for the first time today. Or if someone hears God speak again—this is what will happen in the unseen place of the heart—God will bear testimony in the heart saying:

Matthew 17: 5:...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

- Of Christ's **Deity**—he is the Son of God
- Of Christ's **Mediation**—God has put all into the hands of his Son. He is the go-between, between his people and the Father, ministering to us this word of grace through the Holy Spirit

- Of his **obedience and suffering** unto death—
- Of his **resurrection**—God says, “I am satisfied!”
- Of his **ascension** to heaven and **intercession** for his people—because of God’s Son that you are not in hell right now
- Of **coming again to Judge** this world in righteousness—to **bring his elect, redeemed children home.** (vv9-13.)

1 Corinthians 2: 1: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

It would have pleased men if he would have mingled the grace of God—with man’s righteousness; if he would have tickled the ears with philosophies of men; or if he would have made dead sinners feel like they could exercise a pretended free-will anytime they got good and ready; or that Christ blood was shed for all men without exception so that he would have said Christ only made eternal redemption possible or that he died for all men but really did not accomplish salvation particularly for any. But Paul said “if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Ga 1:10.)

Galatians 6: 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

So Paul said, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Philippians 3: 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

II. PAUL KNEW HE WAS BUT A MAN.

1 Corinthians 2: 3: And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

There is no doubt that to most of Paul’s hearers he had this appearance.

2 Corinthians 10:10: For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

Illustration: The apostle Paul in a line-up of today’s preachers—we would pass him right by.

Paul knew his own strength was NOT HIMSELF, BUT the God of all grace.

2 Corinthians 12: 9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

But most of all—this weakness and fear and trembling was due to his desire for those who heard him to believe on Christ—Paul knew the dire need of those who heard him. Paul was deeply concerned that his hearers be followers of Christ and not stand in the wisdom of men.

2 Cor 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2 Cor 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

Romans 9: 1: I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

1 Corinthians 2: 4: And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

It is not by human wisdom, wit, or will that the gospel is believed and received, but by the regeneration and revelation of the Holy Spirit (v14)

John 3: 3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Matthew 16: 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

HERE IS THE KEY—THE CHIEF CONCERN PAUL HAD.

1 Corinthians 2: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Paul knew that conviction of sin, the revelation of Christ crucified, risen and enthroned, saving faith in Christ alone (apart from merit or works), this living, vital union with Christ is a heart work which can be performed in individuals by the power of the Spirit of God only.

Paul knew: When it is the Holy Spirit that does this work then the confidence and assurance of the believer are not in the preacher, not in man's persuasion, or personality, but in Christ alone. That is what Paul wanted for his hearers.

Romans 2: 29: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Philippians 3: 3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Our prayer is that God give the ability to believe on him: to both speak of him and serve him.

1 Peter 4:11: If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.