

1 Corinthians 2

Verses 1-5:

--(1-2) At this point, Paul has shown the folly of God's message, the recipients of that message, and now he will show the folly of the delivery of that message. This is his practice in his preaching ministry.

--Notice we have *I* four times and *My* twice.

--Paul's practice was not to leverage worldly rhetoric or philosophy when preaching *the testimony of God* or the *message of the cross*.

--He very well could have leveraged these things—as he had the natural talent and intellect to do so—yet he *determined* not to do so. He was not depending on the persuasion of human wisdom but on the witness of Jesus Christ in the power of His Spirit.

--Don't take this lightly. *This apostle*: who could speak of so much more in Christ than any man we have ever known! He was given the mystery of the Church, the mystery of Israel, of the Second Coming, of the depths of sin in Romans, the heights of heaven in Ephesians, the Rapture and Second Coming in the Thessalonian letters, Church order and leadership in the Pastoral Epistles, etc. *This apostle* knew that none of these glorious truths mattered without the foundation of Christ crucified!

--So much of our modern preaching fails to rest on the power of the Holy Spirit and tries to hide or mask its *absence* with various avenues of human wisdom and skill such as: Personal Charisma; Musical Emotionalism; Spiritual Vision; Informational Statistics; the true orator of our day is actually the comedian—entertain us because we are bored with God! etc.

--(3-4) Paul says, I was there in weakness and fear and trembling—maybe physical (**Acts 18:10**) or possibly the spiritual feeling of insufficiency (**2 Corinthians 4:5**).

--Paul was not there representative of himself. There was no idea of “brand” creation. In fact, the more we have of ourselves in the preaching of the Gospel the less we will have of the Holy Spirit—the *only* true Witness of Jesus Christ. *An old preacher said, “We can have the window so painted that it keeps the light out!”*

*Neder (Theology as a Way of Life): “*Anyone who doesn't find it strange that he or she should stand in front of a group of people and talk about God is either deluded or hasn't thought very deeply about what is happening.*”*

--This is the problem with many modern preaching methods and tricks and gimmicks. They are all a reflection of how little we actually trust the Holy Spirit to witness to Christ in the power of God. *No pulpit—No Bible—Stage with a good-looking sinner—Lights and effects—Props and clips—All are things never promised to conduct with power the *message of the cross*, but in fact, make it *of no effect*.*

--This is all preaching in word only. It is not the preaching of the word in the power of God. It is the preaching of a painted cross on a painted hill.

1 Thessalonians 1:5: For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

--What was Paul's basic mode of preaching?

Galatians 3:1: O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

--It is God's business to demonstrate the power of His own message. Not that of the apologist or apologetic "methods". Pentecost was the birthday of true spiritual preaching. We are sent by Christ, with God's testimony of Himself, and His very Spirit to make His message touch human hearts and lives with power. All true ministry is still His ministry.

--As a preacher, I don't trust in my own strengths but I am also not discouraged because of my own weaknesses. Dependence on the Holy Spirit actually frees me as a preacher of the Word of God. I am not at the center of the process. My weakness are not eliminated or excused but God rises above them—as He did for Paul.

--The confidence of any Bible teacher that actually wants their hearers to know God personally is not in their own competence, skill, intellect, likability, or follower and viewer and giver count. My confidence is in the fact that God says He will make Himself known through the foolishness of preaching the message of the cross.

Zechariah 4:6: This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

--(5) Why are the methods or practices of preaching so important? **That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God!** Paul is telling us very clearly that methods matter! There is a harmful way to preach the gospel.

-If I trust human intellect a greater human intellect will confuse me.

-If I trust the knowledge of earthly science then "new" science will confound me.

-If I trust emotional or spiritual experience then ungodly experience will carry me away.

-If I trust human charisma then my trust will be shattered when the charisma fails.

-If I trust emotional moments then my faith will fail as soon as my emotions do.

--How often we sadly see all these things fail. But if I trust the Word of God made known to me in the power of the Holy Spirit my faith rests in God and not men and it will not be shaken.

Saphir (Christ Crucified): "We do not wish to influence, move, soften, terrify, mould; we look to God, that He, by making His truth, His glorious and loving message come into contact with the heart, may draw men unto Himself."

Verses 6-9:

--Paul had wisdom to speak about with mature believers but it was not the wisdom of this **age** (*aión*) or the wisdom of **the rulers of this age**. Every age and time period has its own rulers and philosophy. What will it all come to? **Nothing!** *All reality will conform to God's thoughts and not man's*

--What was the wisdom that Paul spoke of? God's own hidden wisdom—a mystery that could never have been known had He not shared it with us because it was with Him before the foundation of the world (**Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 3:16**).

--**(7-8)** In the plan of God—from Israel to Christ to the Church to the Second Coming—we see all the attributes of God in harmony and wisdom and love as His eternal plan and purpose is unfolded—that is His glory. This plan is something human intellect could have never conceived of.

--Paul says, had the rulers of the world seen or known this, they would have never crucified Christ.

Acts 3:17-18 + 20:28: Yet not, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. . . to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

--**(9)** This verse here is often taken out of context—though the applications are okay—but it is important to be seen its proper place in relation to the hidden wisdom of God tied to the mystery of godliness and the following context. (**Isa. 64:4**)

Verses 10-12:

--We are not ignorant because we do not only have the wisdom of this world and its rulers. We have the Spirit of God who knows God perfectly.

--The emphasis here is on *the means* of our reception of God's wisdom. God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. Again, if our goal is to teach God and the mind of God to other men—how can that be possible for fallen humans? Only by the Holy Spirit!

--Paul brings in a practical example. How can we know another human's thoughts? Who knows what another man is thinking? Only that man. **Some of your spouses think they know what you are thinking. . . in fact, you don't even have to finish your sentences!**

--Only the spirit of that man knows his inner thoughts. In like manner, only the Spirit of God knows God's inner thoughts.

--**(12)** The good news is that God has given us His Holy Spirit!

--Not the spirit of the world—*cosmos*—which is the material order of things and human wisdom like science and history. **Tabernacle as a picture of three layers of wisdom**

--We receive His Spirit that we might **know** the things **freely given to us by God**. **Even the disciples—who walked with Jesus—needed the Holy Spirit to truly understand Christ and His will and His love.**

Verses 13-16:

--**(13)** Holy Spirit taught Words are the Scripture. This is inspiration. God's Words about His own thoughts concerning us and all of life.

1 Thessalonians 2:13: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

--(14) Why does the word of God not make a difference in the lives of the unsaved? Because they do not have the Spirit of God. They do not have the spiritual senses to perceive the reality that is there—like a blind man. *Man was created with the spiritual organs to know God.*

Tozer (The Crucified Life): “You can always test the quality of religious teaching by the enthusiastic reception it receives from unsaved men. If the natural man receives it enthusiastically, it is not of the Spirit of God. Paul says plainly that the natural man cannot know spiritual things. To him, spiritual things are plain foolishness (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).”

--(15) The spiritual person cannot be judged by the natural man who doesn’t have all the pieces of the equation. There are realities that they are leaving out. *We are more than products of our earthly environments.*

--Even so, the spiritual person judges all things in light of God, His Word, and eternity.

--(16) No one can tell God what to do. No one can “work with Him” on an intellectual level (**Isa. 40:13**). But He has given us **the mind of Christ** that we can *know* the thoughts of God.

--You can say that to have Christ’s consciousness is to be made *Christ-aware*. *Self-conscious Vs. God-conscious*