

**Series: *The Wisdom, Wonder, and Witness of the Gospel***  
**The Preaching of the Cross # 3**  
1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

We live in what has been adequately described as the information age. Less than a hundred years ago, our world was much different. If one sought information, it was either received by word of mouth or read from a written page. People used to rely on books, newspapers, or occasional telegraphs to gather the information they needed. We now live in an age of twenty four hour information, readily available through a host of electronic devices: TV, internet, smart phones, email, and various social media apps. In fact, many newspapers are struggling to cover the publication costs of their print editions due to lack of subscribers.

This information age has had an impact on the church as well. There seems to be no end to new approaches to ministry. Everyone is seeking the latest seminar, program, or conference to stimulate and promote growth among the church. I receive continual emails about the latest conferences, e-books, study approaches, and programs that are almost certainly guaranteed to create growth.

Paul's world was much different, but I am sure the struggles he faced shared similarities with our day. He preached to a people who were known for their wisdom, culture, and deep philosophical thought. No doubt Paul was continually pressured to try some new or different approach to ministry. As tempting as it may have been, Paul remained steadfast. He knew what God had called him to do and he was confident of the effectiveness of preaching the Gospel. There may have been varied approaches or methods used in ministry, but his message never changed. He continued to preach the cross of Jesus Christ!

As we continue our series: *The Wisdom, Wonder, and Witness of the Gospel*, I want to examine the [assurances](#) Paul shares in our text. I hope to emphasize: [The Preaching of the Cross](#). As we look at this passage, I trust you too will realize the need and significance of this biblical message in order to reach the lost for Christ. We discover Paul's message was:

**I. A Central Message** (1-2) – Paul shared much as he preached to the multitudes he encountered, but his message contained a central theme. Regardless of the location or makeup of the crowd, Paul's preaching was always consistent. Notice:

**A. The Presentation of the Message** (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](#). It is evident that Paul was faithful to declare the Gospel to all who would hear. He was committed to sharing the good news

with as many as he could, regardless of the circumstances or obstacles he faced. He had been saved by the grace of God and called to proclaim the Gospel to the lost and dying. Everywhere Paul went, he saw a mission field.

- I know that seems simple, but we need to be reminded and challenged to share our faith. We cannot expect others to come to Christ if we are unwilling to share the good news of the Gospel with them: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of humanity.
- I also realized Paul was not looking for a particular type or situation in which to share. It didn't matter their social status, race, or religious affiliation. Paul saw everyone as someone who needed to hear of Christ. We will never share our faith if we are waiting on the "perfect" situation. We must remember as well, Christ died for all men, not just those who look or act as we do. If we expect to reach others for Christ, we must be willing to speak up and share the Gospel.

**B. The Perception of the Messenger** (1a) – [And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.](#) Keep in mind that Paul was a very educated man. He was a biblical scholar who possessed enough wisdom and knowledge of Scripture to go toe to toe with the best theologians of the day. However we find a much more subdued approach to ministry. [Paul did not come with excellency of speech or wisdom.](#) He was well aware that people did not need to recognize his wisdom or ability. He was not there promoting himself or a personal agenda. Paul knew it wasn't about him; it was all about Jesus!

- Often it is difficult for highly educated people to speak on a level the common person can understand. God allowed Paul to speak truth with such simplicity that all could comprehend the message. We are not in the category of Paul in wisdom, but if God allowed Paul to speak simply with others, He can enable us to speak boldly and confidently as well. We must realize, as Paul did, we are not sharing our wisdom or our ideas. We are sharing the Gospel of Christ. Often we make serving the Lord much more complicated than it has to be. Our Lord called common fishermen to change the world. He is able to equip us to share our faith if we are willing to do so.

**C. The Principle of the Message** (1b) – [declaring unto you the testimony of God.](#) Paul did not covet personal recognition. He had one message to proclaim and that was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am confident he felt as John the Baptist did. Paul knew that Christ must be exalted and others pointed toward Him. Christ alone has the power to save and the Gospel was of utmost importance. Paul's message was the same wherever he went. He preached Christ crucified, buried, and risen! He preached Christ as the sacrificial atonement for sin and the only means of salvation! If men were to be saved and reconciled to God, that would come through Christ alone.

- We too need to understand and embrace this eternal truth. There is much being done today concerning humanitarian efforts. These are all noble and I am sure most of these agencies mean well. However, if all we do is ease the physical or psychological suffering, we have missed the most important part. These bodies of flesh will wear out and decay. It is appointed unto man to die. We may ease their suffering while in this life, but we must not neglect the spiritual need they have as well. We all have a spirit that will dwell forever in eternity. Ministry must include the Gospel. We cannot neglect sharing Christ with those who are lost and undone apart from Him!

**D. The Priority of the Message** (2) – *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* Many in Paul's day were influenced by Greek culture and philosophy. Those perceived wise were elevated in society. As we said, Paul could've held his own in debate with the greatest minds of the day, but he shared a simple, profound message: the Gospel. He had sat under the greatest scholars of the day, and yet all of that left him lacking and longing for something more. It wasn't until he met Christ that he learned genuine wisdom and found peace within his heart.

- Paul knew the Corinthians didn't need more earthly knowledge. He knew their sinful souls stood in need of salvation, and that was available only through Christ. Paul was confident the preaching of the Gospel would get the job done, bringing conviction and resulting in salvation.
- We live in an age where many are searching for the answer to life's problems. We are bombarded with self-help books, financial advisors, dietary and health experts, cultural and social professors, with each promising to offer a more fulfilling life. It seems our world is consumed with securing a lavish lifestyle, and yet never gives any concern for the life to come.
- There is nothing wrong in enjoying a healthy, fulfilling life, but what the world needs most of all is a relationship with Christ through faith. The church has not been called to jump on the bandwagon of popular culture. We have the solution for the need of humanity. If all you know is Christ crucified, buried, and risen, you are blessed beyond measure with wisdom the world needs to know. The Gospel has power and will reach the lost for Christ! May we be faithful to share it!

**II. A Confident Ministry** (3-4) – Paul now reveals the elements that provide confidence in ministry. He was aware of:

**A. The Inability of the Servant** (3) – *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.* Paul speaks of his attitude and awareness while he ministered in Corinth. There is no sense of arrogance or self-confidence within the great apostle. Actually we find a personal

description that many would not assume concerning Paul. He was in a position of influence and authority, and yet we find him in Corinth clothed in humility. He was near them in [weakness](#), speaking of *physical inability*. He came in [fear](#), *reverence, respect, and honor, realizing the gravity and seriousness of such an endeavor*. Paul also spoke of [trembling](#), *a profound reverence or dread*. Paul was literally humbled to the point of physical weakness by the work he was engaged in. He was not depending upon his wisdom, reputation, or physical presence to secure success. He approached the work of God with great care, reverence, and honor.

- The work of ministry requires those who are clothed in humility. We too must approach the work we are engaged in with fear and trembling. I fear most today are unaware of the sincerity of this great work. Churches do not prosper and souls are not saved due to the abilities and cunning of men. We must be aware of the source of our strength and power. We are privileged to serve the King, and we must honor and reverence Him in all we do. He is the source of salvation, and He will not share His glory with another!

**B. The Ability of the Spirit (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](#): Paul knew his inability was more than compensated by the ability of the Spirit. There could be no doubt God had blessed his work, and Paul knew all of this was attributed to the power of the Spirit working through his efforts. The Lord alone was worthy of the praise. His preaching was effective because it enjoyed a touch of God. The Lord filled Paul with the Spirit when he rose to speak, bringing conviction through the message, and salvation of lost souls.

- This simple truth has not changed and it never will. If the church experiences anything of value, it is achieved by and through the power of the Spirit. Churches do not prosper due to the cleverness or abilities of men. They prosper because the Spirit moves and works through us to accomplish His divine purpose. We too can take comfort in that as well. I don't know how you feel, but I am glad the destiny of this church or any other isn't dependent upon my ability. That doesn't release me of any responsibility in living an upright life, but it does afford great liberty. As long as I am obedient to the Spirit, and follow His direction, I can confidently leave the results to Him!

**III. A Clear Motivation (5)** – [That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God](#). Paul rejoiced and assured the Corinthians, and all believers, their faith and salvation did not rest in the wisdom of men. They had not believed in the message of Paul. They had not been asked to place their faith in a mortal man. They had been pointed to the risen Christ, and through the power of God, they received salvation. There would be occasions when their faith was tested, there would be times of opposition and doubt, but they could rest assured of their salvation! God had offered it through the sacrifice of His Son, and no one could take it away!

- Surely that comforts and challenges us today. We are not sharing current events or a new found formula that is yet to be proven. We have the privilege to share the glorious Gospel, backed by the authority and power of God. Much of what the world offers carries risk and is subject to change. We can point the lost and hurting to Christ for salvation that will never fade or diminish.
- Doesn't that make you want to tell someone about Jesus? Doesn't that make you want everyone to enjoy the hope and assurance you have? The same power that saved you remains able to save others. We must do our part and present the Gospel to the lost. The assurance we enjoy and the promise of salvation for others ought to motivate us to share the good news with a world that is perishing in sin!

**Conclusion:** Our world is changing rapidly around us. We have witnessed more technological advancements than any other generation before us. We have a wealth of information at our fingertips, and yet the world continues to search for answers. The knowledge available through this world may bring temporary pleasure and the latest theories for life, but it does not provide salvation and the inner peace associated with a relationship with Christ. One could possess all the knowledge offered by the world and die lost without Christ. We must be faithful to proclaim the Gospel to the world. The church is the only entity sharing the good news. We cannot fail. There is too much at stake.

Are you faithful in proclaiming the Gospel to the world? It isn't a complicated message, but it is profound and life changing. Jesus came to earth, died for sinners, and rose again. He provided the means of salvation for all who look to Him by faith. Have you received Christ as your Savior? If not, repent of your sin and embrace the Gospel by faith!