

## Momentum in Ministry

1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

Do you ever get discouraged while trying to serve the Lord? Are there times in your Christian journey when you feel outnumbered and overwhelmed in our modern society? I am sure we have all experienced those feelings at times. It is clear that our world is quickly changing, and the vast majority of current change is heading further away from God and the values we hold dear. It seems increasingly difficult to maintain a positive witness with so many distractions and temptations. We even feel like at times our efforts are of little value. The sea of opposition is relentless as we try to stand for the Lord and present the Gospel to those who need to hear.

There is comfort for the discouraged heart in this passage. If you find yourself in the midst of difficult circumstances, you are in good company. Paul too faced circumstances that must've been overwhelming at times. We know he was committed to the Gospel, and yet he was surrounded by those who would stop at nothing to silence his voice and prevent others from coming to faith in Christ. Corinth was a particularly difficult place to minister, but Paul kept his composure. He was a seasoned man of God who had learned, to not only face opposition, but to deal with it in a positive and productive way.

I have no doubt our society will continue to deteriorate morally and spiritually, but that doesn't excuse us from our responsibilities. All have not been called to preach or pastor, but all believers are called to minister to others and share the Gospel. If we are to maintain our witness and overcome the difficulties we face, we need to learn and apply the strategies Paul used. I want to consider the [elements](#) of service Paul speaks of as we think on: [Momentum in Ministry](#).

**I. The Approach to Ministry** (1-2) – Paul developed a particular approach to ministry that remained consistent regardless of the audience or location. There were certain elements of his approach that never changed. We need to develop and practice this approach as well. Consider:

**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 possibly 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 have the received salvation and are obligated 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.

- 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. His grace is not reserved for those of the Baptist persuasion or of the middle class. 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. He spoke in such a way as to reach all men regardless of their educational level or status. 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. We don't have to be eloquent in speech or a Rhodes Scholar to share our faith. 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 be used.

**C. The Priority in the Message (1b)** – [declaring unto you the testimony of God.](#) Paul was not interested in impressing others with his ability. He 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. Billions of dollars a year are spent to ease the suffering of the less fortunate. 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. Wouldn't it be tragic to meet every physical need and yet never address the spiritual condition? Ministry must include the Gospel. We cannot neglect sharing Christ with those who are lost and undone apart from Him! Paul saw much physical suffering, but he knew their spiritual needs were much more urgent.

**D. The Perfection in 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. This was the age of the great thinkers. 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 been brought up around wisdom and human reasoning. 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 they didn't need another human to revere for the wisdom they possessed. 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 eternal salvation. Corinth and the world needed to hear the message of Christ.

- 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 of these promising to offer a more fulfilling life. It seems our world is consumed with creating the most lavish lifestyle here on earth, 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!

## **I. The Approach to Ministry** (1-2)

**II. The Assurance in Ministry (3-5)** – In our closing verses, Paul reveals the elements that afford absolute assurance in ministry. These include:

**A. The Humility 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 well versed in Scripture. He had worked his way up the religious ladder prior to coming to Christ. He quickly became a man of power 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 needs and 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. We are nothing in and of ourselves. 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, but 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!
- Many feel as if the work would cease were it not for their efforts. I am thankful to have a part in the work of the Lord, but I am also aware that He can do all He pleases, with or without me!

**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 used him mightily in reaching the lost and planting churches, but 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 must've brought great comfort to Paul. He was keenly aware of his inability, and yet he knew the work was not dependent upon him. This offered great liberty and confidence as he preached and pastored.

- 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!

**C. The Security of the Saved** (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, 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.

**Conclusion:** I have been encouraged and challenged by this passage. We all get weary in ministry and even doubt our effectiveness. We must understand that we are not serving within our own power or understanding. We are not proclaiming our message, but the message of Christ. If we will be faithful to share the Gospel, God will honor our efforts and He will provide the increase!

Do you need strength and guidance for the work you've been called to? If so, come and find it in the Lord. Are you burdened for others who do not know Christ? Come and seek the help you need to share your faith with them. Maybe you have never been saved and you realize your need this morning. If that is the case, come to Jesus. He stands ready to save you if you will only come to Him in faith!