

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

People who speak well seem to be at a premium. They know how to shape words to draw people in and get them to budge, buy, or believe. Just with how they talk and communicate they are able to influence. If you have ever been able to be around such a person, you might find yourself believing what they say no matter what they speak. It's not just the words that they say but their eloquence that brings you to hang from every word. Those with that gift of gab can weave a masterpiece of words from a single thread and the audience will ooo and ahh without any real message on display.

The Corinthians held this kind of eloquent speaker in high regards; in, fact, they idolized him. The clever speaker and the skillful debater—they not only admired but were willing to place their hard earned money on the table just to get a ticket to hear him speak. They would spend their fortunes to hire such a person to teach them word-craft and eloquence. They wanted to learn by persuasive words and eloquent diction. Their view: the presentation of the message was as just as valuable as the message.

To them, God sent the Apostle Paul. Paul was almost the opposite, as his own words indicate. **When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed the testimony about God.** Instead Paul kept it simple. He preached simple sermons with straightforward structure which the Holy Spirit strengthened. He was no pulpit orator like our TV evangelists. Nor did he dazzle the Corinthians by making impressive arguments out of the simple gospel. In his Spirit-filled wisdom, he knew the best way to proclaim the Gospel for them was to say it and get out of the way.

As he saw all the issues that faced the Corinthians, Paul centered on the only message that cast a ripple through the unbroken sea of their sin. **For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** That was the simple message Paul spoke to the Corinthians. Could Paul have spoken that message with eloquence? Could he have dazzled them with clever quips? Yes, he was a well-educated speaker. He could have wooed and wowed the Corinthians with his words but that would have brought no great benefit for their souls. That would have taken away from the message God gave him to speak. Paul's faith let him see that it wasn't about his words that proclaimed the message, but the Holy Spirit's Power.

God tell us, we don't need to woo and wow people to get them to believe the God's message. We don't need to make it better or rely on our own strength to get it to work. Instead he tells us to keep our proclamation simple. As we seek to share our faith with others it's not about coming up with some great oration to keep everyone's attention or to logically persuade an unbeliever to believe.

That is one problem with our witness that branches off in two directions. Either we don't understand how powerful the Holy Spirit is when he works through the word or we try to add our own power which hinders the announcement of the gospel. The entire message of God's Word is centered on Jesus Christ and him crucified to pay for the sins of the world. Every word, syllable and letter points to our forgiveness as it shows what Jesus did as he suffered and died for our iniquities.

That is what God reveals to us. The glory of Jesus Christ. The Son of God is magnified as the only message this world needs. Only a few short weeks after visiting the manger, we continue to follow Jesus to the cross. Many people would like to have that message left behind because that message doesn't always make them feel good. Instead it brings up the reason why Jesus needed to be crucified. Many people would be glad to have a pastor or speaker who would not touch a

guilty conscience. Of course then we would never have the need to repent of our sins and turn get blown away by Christ the crucified. When there is the right preaching of the law and gospel, we see the reason to praise God. Only then is our spiritual life refreshed. Where the Word of God is simply proclaimed the sinners stuck in sin are brought by the Holy Spirit's power out of darkness into God's forgiving light.

Paul carried that special assurance with him as he spoke to the Corinthians. He had not come flexing his muscles to awe the crowd. Rather, he came with the assurance of the Holy Spirit strength in his ministry. Based on God's promise, Paul confidently said, **I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.**

Think of the confidence that comes knowing that God is behind the Gospel. The success of any missionary journey was due to the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. Paul would have been a failure if he would have had to wow or woo the people with his oratory. But the Holy Ghost, through Paul, caused the holy Christian church to grow and thrive. The Holy Spirit did not need rhetorical and philosophical arguments to build the church, just the Word of God.

The Spirit's power is the gospel. The church was not built by shaming the people into joining, or forcing them in by the law. The Holy Spirit turns the hearts of people around with the message of Christ and him crucified. It is the love of God for the lost sinner that works in the sinner's heart. This power makes spiritually dead people alive in Christ. This is the power of which Paul wrote to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). This is the power of God works in the infant, in the simple and common, in the complex and unique, in the ungodly, and in all the members of the congregation. This brings a person to faith and keeps him in the faith. No wonder the Corinthians still needed to hear the gospel! No wonder we need to still hear this Good News!

Although this message is simple, don't think it is weak. Something this powerful isn't like a little cat the needs to be protected but instead like a lion in a cage. Do you know the best way to protect a caged lion? It's really simple. Let it out. It will take care of itself. It will use its own power to fend for itself. It has the power to destroy any enemy that threatens it. It will not be stopped as it crushes. It will devour its enemies and knock out of the way those that oppose it.

Why did God do it this way? **So that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.** Human wisdom can't make believers in God; only God's wisdom and power can. Such a message overcomes the own human weaknesses. It takes the pressure of having to come up with just the right words. If success depended on the speaker of the gospel and his intellectual abilities, pity would have to come upon every sinner because there is not a person smart enough to save another. Or what sure comfort could be given to anyone if our faith was measured by our IQ? Our salvation is not in what we bring but in faithfulness to God's Word, in terms of faithfulness to the message of **Christ and him crucified.**

You can carry that assurance whenever you hear or speak the God of Word. You carry the same message the Paul carried to the Corinthians. You can be like him as he was able to leave behind the struggle he faced in other cities and the disappointment he felt as he didn't see the results he sought. He left those behind and focused on Christ crucified for him. He was able to get out of the way and let the Word go to work and not worry about if he would select all the right words or say it just as he should. Instead, he got to be the one who let it out and watched the demonstration of the Spirit's power. Amen.