



This week we continue our expository verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Corinthians.

In *The Foolishness of Preaching the Gospel—Part 1* we learned that God's wisdom is superior to: human intellect, spiritual experts, experience, and personal power. In part 2 we explored the benefits of being 'in Christ'.

This week, in Part 3 of *The Foolishness of Preaching the Gospel* from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 we explore the power of preaching the gospel. John MacArthur writes that "The primary task, the only task, of the minister is to manifest the truth of God."

The pulpit study guide is written weekly by the pastoral staff of Crossroads Community Church. It is designed for small group leaders to use as a discussion facilitation tool during small group meetings. If you would like to join a small group at Crossroads, drop us an email to smallgroups@crossroadswired.com or give us a call at 419-529-0750 – Ext. 109.

Group Study Questions

- Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5. “Do you know what this is? It’s God’s philosophy of ministry...pastor’s job description” – Tim Armstrong

Pastor’s Job Description:

1. **Preach the Word**

- Preach (κηρύσσω kērússō) means to “to herald, proclaim”. Preaching expository messages is not popular today. Repeatedly Paul sets the standard for focusing on the Word [2 Timothy 1:8, 13-14, 2:15-16, 3:16-17].
- Reread 1 Corinthians 2:4-5. In these verses Paul writes 2 times that God’s Word has _____?
 - The pastor, preacher, or herald presents the inspired Word of God which is powerful and brings about life transformation.

2. **Be Always Ready** *in season and out of season.*

- The text is specifically speaking to being ready to preach God’s Word, but what are some other areas in life that we should be ready?
- Discuss what it means to always be ready.

3. **Admonish & Teach**

- What does it mean to Admonish & Teach? Paul writes in verse 2 “*reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*” Implicit in this instruction is correction. Discuss / compare / contrast correction of a young child versus correction via the preaching of the Word of God.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

¹I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

4. Never Compromise

- In verse 5 Paul writes to Timothy to “*fulfill your ministry.*” Similar to raising children, there is a tremendous need to remain consistent. People may not want to hear “*sound teaching*” [verse 3], but preaching needs to continue. Discuss the importance of consistency and continuing over time.

2 Timothy 4 is the pastor’s mandate. This is what a pastor is to do. Returning to our primary text, from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Pastor Tim discussed 5 Methods of Presenting the Gospel. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

From Pastor Tim’s message and John MacArthur’s Commentary, discuss [compare & contrast] the methods of presenting the gospel:

- *Not with Lofty speech*
 - “*High sounding words of wisdom*”
- *Not with Wisdom*
 - “*Philosophical knowledge*”
- *But in Weakness, Fear & Trembling*
 - “*Paul’s humanness*”
- *Not with Plausible Words of Wisdom*
 - “*persuasive, choreographed words*”
- *But in Demonstration of the Spirit & Power*
 - “*Transformation*”

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Proclaiming Christ Crucified

¹And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

For Further Study

Bible Knowledge Commentary¹

2 Timothy 4:1-5

4:1. It would be difficult to see how Paul could have made his charge to Timothy any more weighty (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21; 6:13). He adjured Timothy, not only **in the name of God and of Christ**, but in the light of the coming judgment, Christ's return (*epiphaneian*, **appearing**; cf. 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13), and the establishment of **His millennial kingdom**.

4:2. The content of Paul's charge represents the central thrust of every minister's task: Timothy was to **preach the Word**. All the weight of verse 1 bears on this entreaty. Paul could hardly have emphasized the matter more strongly. Because the Word is inspired and profitable for all aspects of the ministry, proclaiming that Word was to be Timothy's business **in season and out of season**, that is, he was to stand by this duty whether the opportunity seemed ripe or not. Those in error he was to **correct** (cf. 2:25); those who were sinning he was to **rebuke** (1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:13; 2:15); those who were doing well he was to **encourage**. These are the facets of public ministry: proclamation, correction, rebuke, and encouragement—all of which must be done **with great patience and careful instruction**.

4:3-4. The reason Paul's charge to Timothy is so solemn is that **the time will come**—and no doubt was already partially present, in the apostle's opinion—**when men will not put up with sound** (lit., "healthy"; cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:8) **doctrine**. Instead ... they would seek out (lit. "heap up") **teachers**, of whom many are always available, who would tell them what they wanted to hear rather than face them with the truth (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Such teachers merely "tickle the ear" so that they **turn people away from the truth** on the one hand and toward **myths** (*mythous*; cf. 1 Tim. 1:4) on the other. Paul's main focus in this passage was on the inclinations of the audience rather than, as was more his custom (but cf. 2 Tim. 3:6-7), the evil intent of the false teachers. For error to flourish both sides of the transaction must cooperate. This is the sixth time Paul used "truth" in this epistle (cf. 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7-8). (He referred to truth five times in 1 Tim. [2:4, 7; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5] and twice in Titus [1:1, 14].) Obviously he was concerned about the dangers of heresies diverting people from God's truth.

4:5. Again Paul used the strong contrast **But you ...** (cf. 3:10, 14). Timothy must remain cool-headed in the face of difficulties. He must be ready to **endure hardship** (cf. 2:3) as the pressure mounted. He must **do the work of an evangelist**, proclaiming the gospel at every opportunity. (There is no reason to assume, as some suggest, that Timothy was without the gift of evangelism). In every way, Paul wrote, fulfill **your ministry** (*diakonian*, the word for voluntary "service" from which comes "deacon").

For Further Study

MacArthur Commentary²

1 Corinthians

As we have noted, the gospel of God's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption cannot be obtained through human wisdom. Here Paul demonstrates that it also is not to be presented through human wisdom. Paul did not come to Corinth as a philosopher but as a witness. He came **proclaiming ... the testimony of God**. **Testimony** (*marturion*) means just that—a testimony or witness. A person can only testify to what he himself has seen or heard or experienced. A witness in a courtroom is to report only what he knows objectively, factually, and personally. He is not to speculate, guess, or deduce. Paul was a witness only to God's revelation, not to his own human understanding or reason or inclinations. God's revelation was everything; human wisdom was nothing.

We should not come to church to hear the pastor's opinions about politics, psychology, economics, or even religion. We should come to hear a word from the Lord *through* the pastor. God's Word edifies and unifies; human opinions confuse and divide.

Paul assured the Corinthians that he had not come to them with a lot of human verbiage and opinion. He presented them with the testimony of God and nothing else. Some years later he assured them again: "We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (Cor. 4:2). The primary task, the *only* task, of the ministry is to manifest the truth of God.

Paul warned Timothy, "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Timothy was to "give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching" (v. 13). That was his job. That is every preacher's job. Any other approach prostitutes the pulpit.

In his second letter to that young minister, Paul solemnly charged him "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus" to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). I cannot comprehend how any man who calls himself a minister of God can do anything but preach the Word of God and be ready to do it "in season and out of season" (v. 2). Many congregations, however, do not *want*

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (2 Ti 4:1-5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

MacArthur, J. (1996). *1 Corinthians* (54-59). Chicago: Moody Press.

their pastors to preach only the Word. They “will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (v. 3). As one commentator has observed, “In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.” Some people, including some immature believers, will go from church to church looking for the right preacher. Unfortunately their idea of “right” preaching is not sound biblical exposition but interesting observations and suggestions based on the preacher’s personal philosophy. They are not looking for a word from God to believe but for a word from man to consider.

When Paul had preached to the Corinthians, as when he had preached anywhere, he was **determined to know nothing among his hearers except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**. He was not interested in discussing men’s ideas or insights, his own or those of anyone else. He would proclaim nothing but Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, and redeeming Jesus Christ. He did not preach Jesus simply as the perfect teacher or the perfect example or the perfect Man—though He was all of these. The foundation of all of his preaching was Jesus as the divine Savior.

Obviously the apostle was not saying that he preached or taught nothing but messages, or that he expounded only those parts of Scripture that deal directly with Christ’s atonement. He taught the full counsel of God, as his writings make clear (Acts 20:27). He ministered in Corinth for a year and a half, “teaching the word of God among [them]” (Acts 18:11). But it was, and still is, the cross of Jesus Christ that is the stumbling block or the foolishness to unbelievers (1 Cor. 1:23), and until a person accepts God’s revelation in the cross, no other revelation matters. The preaching of the cross was so dominant in the early church that many Jews and Gentiles accused the Christians of worshiping a dead man. To help a person understand the gospel Paul would go to any length to explain and clarify the cross, but he would not say one word to modify or contradict it.

Weakness, fear, and trembling do not seem appropriate to Paul; and they were not appropriate in their usual senses. The **weakness** in which Paul had come to Corinth was the weakness of the gospel, which is really the power of God (1 Cor. 1:25, 27). And by **fear** and **trembling** I do not think he was referring to mental timidity or to physical shaking. He preached boldly, lived boldly, and counseled other believers to be bold in the things of the Lord (Acts 13:46; 19:8; Eph. 3:12; 6:19). He used the phrase “fear and trembling” in several other passages, each of which have to do with deep concern over an important, urgent issue (2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12).

Paul came to Corinth after being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, run out of Thessalonica and Berea, and scoffed at in Athens (Acts 16:22–24; 17:10, 13–14, 32). He came knowing that to be “Corinthianized” meant to be morally corrupt in the extreme. Corinth was the epitome of paganism and moral degeneracy. Though having every human reason to be discouraged and no doubt every temptation from Satan to compromise, Paul would not change his message. He was fearful and trembling only in the sense of being deeply anxious that the gospel somehow find root even in this most unpromising of places. He was not fearful for his own life or safety or of the gospel’s having lost its power. He was fearful only of its being rejected, and of the terrible consequences of that rejection. Surely he also feared his own inadequacy and sin which could weaken his ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16, 27).

Paul was especially determined, therefore, that his **message and ... preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom**. Human words of wisdom, no matter how impressive and persuasive, would have robbed the gospel of its power. He saw no place for calculated theatrics and techniques to manipulate response. Many have responded to an emotional appeal, without a true knowledge and conviction of God. Paul did not do that kind of preaching. He surely would have gotten a wider and more receptive hearing, but his hearers would have been left in their sins and without a Savior. Some have said that the great preacher Jonathan Edwards read his sermons so that he would not be guilty of using human persuasive techniques to gain a response. He wanted only the message to bring the results.

Paul had great natural abilities, but he did not rely on them. Even the human words and wisdom of an apostle could not save a person. He did not want his hearers to identify with his own wisdom, which could give them only another philosophy, but with God’s wisdom in Jesus Christ, which could give them eternal life.

I remember a pastor’s saying to me one day after the morning service, “Do you see that man over there? He is one of my converts.” He then explained, “Not the Lord’s, but mine.” The man had become a disciple of the pastor but not a disciple of Christ.

John Stott has written, “It seems that the only preaching God honors through which His wisdom and power are expressed is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both the weakling and the fool.”

The unbelieving Corinthians, as all unbelievers, had needed the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and that is what Paul had brought them. That is all that he had preached and practiced among them. Only God’s Spirit and power could deliver them from sin and bring them to Himself. He did not want them to have a new philosophy but new life.

Charles Spurgeon said:

The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.

If the Corinthians had come to have faith in **the wisdom of men**, even in Paul's wisdom, they might have changed intellectually, but they would not have changed spiritually. They would still have been spiritually dead, and Paul would not have been able to write to them as saints and brothers (1:2, 10). He had not come with his own message but had come simply as a channel of God's message. Only the message of God brings with it **the power of God**.

The church should not have divisions based on philosophy any more than it should have divisions based on individuals. We are to be united around God's wisdom, not human wisdom. We are one in Jesus Christ and should be one in His Word and power, and in the fellowship of those who are His.