

## Message #8

## I Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul was a called apostle, an inspired writer, a gifted teacher and a brilliant theologian. He was a tremendous man of God. He had been personally taught by Jesus Christ, he had been caught up to the third heaven, he wrote at least 13 N.T. books of the Bible, and he was the ultimate example of a man of God. He was totally committed to doing God's will in ministering God's Word. Paul never believed in forcing or manipulating people. We WILL NEVER find him giving altar calls, we WILL NEVER find him trying to get people to repeat words after him, and we WILL NEVER find him using any form of gimmickry. We ALWAYS find him faithfully proclaiming the Word of God.

The famous philosopher Aristotle, who lived about 300 years before Paul, wrote his famous book "*Rhetoric*" in which he set forth that if you mastered certain oratorical skills and could learn enough about your audience, you could literally persuade any group into believing anything.

**POWERFUL FAITH IS NOT PRODUCED BY HUMAN MANIPULATION; IT IS PRODUCED BY A PROPER SPIRIT-CONTROLLED MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD.**

The ministry of the Apostle Paul may not have met the philosophic criteria of men, but it most assuredly met the divine criteria of God. Paul WAS NOT interested in pleasing, impressing or manipulating people. His primary interest was to do the will of God and have a ministry led by God's Spirit that would unleash the power of God.

**QUALITY #1** – Powerful faith is produced and developed by a proper message. **2:1-2**

The words "proclaiming" (2:1) and "determined" (2:2) are words that express the fact that Paul carefully evaluated what he publicly proclaimed. He carefully analyzed the content of his preaching and teaching ministry and in doing so he came to two conclusions:

**Conclusion #1** - Powerful faith is not produced by great oration. **2:1a**

The word "superiority" is a word that refers to something that stands preeminent. The word "speech" refers to the order of words and the term "wisdom" refers to the logic of the words. This was obviously a direct reference to Greek rhetoric and philosophy.

Paul knew powerful faith IS NOT produced by the logical and reasoning abilities of men; it is produced by the Word of God. Powerful faith is produced in God's people by a careful exposition of God's Word, not by a wonderful oration of man's word.

**Conclusion #2** - Powerful faith is produced by biblical instruction. **2:1b-2**

When Paul says he came "proclaiming the testimony of God" and "Christ crucified," what he meant is that he carefully expounded and taught the Word of God and particularly instructed as to how that related to Jesus Christ.

We know from 1:30 that Paul carefully taught the doctrines of justification, sanctification and redemption. Paul personally taught, emphasized and commanded that the primary responsibility of a true minister was to accurately handle and expound the Word of God and the doctrines of God (i.e. II Cor. 4:2; I Tim. 4:13; II Tim. 4:1-2). The reason why he stressed this is because he knew this was the key to producing powerful faith in God's people.

**QUALITY #2** – Powerful faith is produced and developed by proper attitudes. **2:3**

**Attitude #1** - He ministered in an attitude of weakness. **2:3a**

This is not implying that Paul was a wimp, because he was anything but that (I Cor. 4:18-21). What this means is that Paul DID NOT present himself as a powerful philosopher of this world. In fact, he saw himself as someone weak in the world's estimation (I Cor. 1:27).

**Attitude #2** - He ministered in an attitude of fear. **2:3b**

Paul did not fear for his own life, nor did he fear any man; but he did fear God and taught others to fear Him (Phil. 2:12; Eph. 6:5-6).

**Attitude #3** - He ministered in an attitude of trembling. **2:3c**

Contextually, one reason why Paul ministered as one who revered God is because this is the type of attitude God uses to powerfully develop the faith of other people.

**QUALITY #3** – Powerful faith is produced and developed by proper speech. **2:4**

In this verse Paul clearly and carefully expresses what he didn't do with his speech and what he did do with his speech:

**Point #1** - He did not use his speech that was humanly persuasive. **2:4a**

Paul would have flunked any course on public speaking, for he refused to use any skilled tactics of rhetoric to influence his audience.

**Point #2** - He did use speech that was God-empowered. **2:4b**

Paul believed that the power of God was unleashed in preaching (1:17, 18, 21).

Now **verse 5** is extremely important because it gives us the purpose or result of this type of preaching ministry.

Paul wanted a strong faith in God's people and a strong faith is never produced by the manipulation of man; a strong faith is always produced by the revelation of God.

Those who purely proclaim the Word of God without any attempt to manipulate or dominate will leave behind a people with faith rooted in the power of God. It will stand, it will last. The tragedy of the Corinthians church is that it was so carnal, Paul had to explain why he expounded God's Word.

Powerful faith is not produced by human manipulation; it is produced by a proper Spirit-controlled ministry of the Word of God.