

1 Cor. 2:1-5 (WCF 14:1) "The Importance of Preaching"

For the Children: What are some of the ways in which you can be taught something? You could read it, hear it explained, Watch a YouTube video about it. For many people, the best way is to have a combination of sight and sound – to read it, say it and hear it. Reading God's Word every day is very important. But the Holy Spirit brings it very powerfully to us through preaching. Even a sermon we do not particularly enjoy at the time may "speak to us" powerfully, because of the Spirit's work. **Questions:** Why does the apostle Paul want to avoid fancy words and arguments in preaching? How does he want to bring the Trinity into his preaching? What are some of the things that preachers sometimes do that go against what the apostle is saying here?

Introduction:

First Point: Emphasis on the Spoken Word

- 1) **Preaching Words:** The text refers to "speech," "proclaiming," "message," "preaching" and "words." Preaching is singled out as the chief means by which the Holy Spirit produces and strengthens faith. See also Rom. 10:14-15, 17; and Acts 6:4. The Heidelberg also makes this point, that the Spirit produces faith by the preaching and confirms it through the sacraments. WCF 14:1 adds that prayer also strengthens faith.
- 2) **Why Preaching Is So Important:** Why does preaching have this prime place, when God's Word is just as powerful in any form of communication? It is not just that preachers are often better trained to explain it. Nor is just that the Church oversees the ministry of the Word, the use of the "keys of the kingdom" and the Great Commission. What makes the difference is that the Spirit uses preaching, according to His purposes, in a powerful way. That is why the apostle says that his preaching was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (v.4). The sacraments help strengthen faith by appealing to our senses; and in prayer we ask the Lord to use the preaching to strengthen our faith.

Second Point: De-Emphasis on Human Strength

- 1) **Preaching in Weakness:** The apostle did not want to preach with fancy words or clever logic or philosophy, so as to impress worldly men. He preached in weakness, fear and trembling – perhaps due to his "thorn in the flesh."
- 2) **All the Glory to God:** Paul wanted to preach only God's testimony, His Self-revelation, without embellishment. He wanted to preach only Christ and Him crucified – a summary of the whole counsel of God, not a limitation to the bare fundamentals. He wanted to preach only in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is in accordance with Is. 29:14/1 Cor.1:19, re God's wisdom and power confounding the so-called wisdom and power of men.
- 3) **A Proper Foundation for Faith:** If preachers persuade men by their eloquence, logic or philosophy, rather than God's Word and Spirit, they supply a false foundation for faith (v.5). That is no way to produce, strengthen or increase faith.

Third Point: Emphasis on the Lord

- 1) **A Trinitarian Emphasis:** The apostle wants his preaching to be Trinitarian – preaching God's witness; Christ, and Him crucified – Christ-centred preaching; in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is God-centred, rather than man-centred preaching.
- 2) **Why This Matters:** When preaching is done in this way, with the Word accurately exegeted; Christ placed at the centre; and the Holy Spirit using the preaching to open and close the kingdom -this is a particularly powerful form of communicating God's will. Those who diminish its importance are failing to give all the glory to God and depriving themselves of the prime way in which the Spirit produces and strengthens faith.

Conclusion: