

Sunday, October 4, 2015—I Corinthians 2:1-5: Where Does Your Faith Stand?

Introduction

- Two weeks ago, before being gone at a Bible Conference in Ohio, we finished our study of chapter 1.
- In doing so we saw in verse 29 that the reason God has set things up in the manner described in verses 27 and 28 is so “that no flesh should glory in his presence.”
- According to verse 31, if there is going to be any glorying it is going to be “in the Lord.”
- This morning we want to begin our study of Chapter 2 by looking at verses 1 through 5.

I Corinthians 2:1

- **And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.**
- Building off the conclusion of Chapter 1, Paul elaborates on how he conducted his ministry in Corinth at the beginning of Chapter 2. Chapter 2 Verse 1 picks up where Chapter 1 Verse 17 left off in terms of Paul describing his ministry among the saints at Corinth. Chapter 1 Verses 18-31 are a bit of a digression to explain the statement in Chapter 1 Verse 17 regarding the “wisdom of words” and the “cross of Christ” being made of none effect.
- When Paul came to the Corinthians and declared unto them the “testimony of God” he did not utilize: 1) excellency of speech, or 2) wisdom.
- I Corinthians 1:17—we already know from this verse that Paul did not preach his gospel with “wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” Paul did not need to preach Christ in this manner because he knew that the power of God unto salvation resides in the “preaching of cross.”
- *Excellency of Speech*—was not a trait that Paul when teaching in Corinth. The English word “excellency” carries the following relevant meanings according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*:
 - An valuable quality; any thing highly laudable, meritorious or virtuous, in persons, or valuable and esteemed, in things. Purity of heart, uprightness of mind, sincerity, virtue, piety, are excellencies of character; symmetry of parts, strength and beauty are excellencies of body; an accurate knowledge of an art is an excellence in the artisan; soundness and durability are excellencies in timber; fertility, in land; elegance, in writing.

In short, whatever contributes to exalt man, or to render him esteemed and happy, or to bless society, is in him an excellence.

- II Corinthians 10:10—the Corinthians viewed Paul’s physical presence as being weak and his speech as being contemptible. If something is “contemptible” it is the exact opposite of possessing a quality of “excellency.”
- Paul’s lack of “excellency” became a problem after he left and Apollos came to town.
- Acts 18:24—remember that Paul was the exact opposite of Apollos who was “eloquent.” The English word “eloquent” means:
 - Having the power of oratory; speaking with fluency, propriety, elegance and animation; as an eloquent orator; an eloquent preacher. Composed with elegance and spirit; elegant and animated; adapted to please, affect and persuade; as an eloquent address; an eloquent petition or remonstrance; an eloquent history. (*Webster’s 1828*)
- I Corinthians 1:6—the testimony of Christ being confirmed in them has to do with the Paul declaring unto them the testimony of God (I Cor. 2:1).

I Corinthians 2:2

- **For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**
- In terms of his preaching in Corinth, Paul stuck with the basics, i.e., the preaching of “Christ crucified” (I Cor. 1:23).
- Note the past tense in English on the expression, “for I determined.” In other words, Paul made this determination before he entered in among them. In Greek, the verb translated “determined” is in the Aorist Tense and the Indicative Mood which indicates an action that happened at a specific point of time in the past.
- Paul knew more than the simple message of Christ crucified when he arrived at Corinth he just determined not to go beyond it in terms of his preaching to the Corinthians.
- I Corinthians 1:30—Paul wanted to make sure that the Corinthians were grounded in the basics and where properly glorying in Christ before moving on to more advanced truths.
- One has to wonder if Paul made this determination because of the unique set of cultural circumstances surrounding the city of Corinth. Paul seems to have known that if he had given the Corinthians too much too fast they would not have been able to handle it.
- It is worth considering that Paul’s course of conduct in Corinth was influenced by his experience in Athens, the last city he was in prior to his arrival in Corinth. While in Athens Paul waxed more philosophical, according to Acts 17.
 - Acts 17:16-33

- Acts 17:34—while some believed there is no record in the Acts chronology of a local church being established in Athens.

I Corinthians 2:3-4

- **And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 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:**
- According to verse 3, Paul appears to have been in an uneasy frame of mind when he arrived at Corinth. Perhaps his experiences in Acts 17 where weighing heavily upon his mind.
 - Acts 17:5-14, 16
- Acts 18:9-10—the Lord himself appeared to Paul while he was in the city and reassured Paul regarding his ministry in Corinth.
- Regarding verse 4, twice already we have seen Paul refer to the fact that his “speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom.”
 - I Corinthians 1:17, 2:1
- In contrast to using “enticing words of man’s wisdom” to persuade his hearers, Paul did the opposite; his speaking and preaching were “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Note the contrastive conjunctive “but.”
- The English word “demonstration” means: 1) the act of demonstrating, or of exhibiting certain proof. 2) The highest degree of evidence; certain proof exhibited, or such proof as establishes a fact or proposition beyond a possibility of doubt, or as shows the contrary position to be absurd or impossible. 3) Indubitable evidence of the senses, or of reason; evidence which satisfies the mind of the certainty of a fact or proposition. Thus we hold that the works of nature exhibit demonstration of the existence of a God.
- In other words, Paul relied upon the Holy Spirit to convict his hearers of the truth regarding their sin and Christ’s payment for it.
 - I Thessalonians 1:5
- Likewise, Paul rested in the power of the Holy Spirit and message of the cross not in his own ability to persuade.
 - Romans 1:16—the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation

- I Corinthians 1:18, 24
- The power of God unto salvation is the preaching of cross not in our ability to persuade.

I Corinthians 2:5

- **That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**
- Why did Paul do things in this manner? *That* (purpose and intent) the faith of Corinthians would be in something that would actually save them from their sins.
- Read quote from McGee page 13.
- Read quote from Ironside pages 87-88.
- Romans 10:17