

## **The Pauline Method of Evangelism I Corinthians 2:1-5**

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

In I Corinthians 2:1-5 he clearly tells us how he preached the Gospel – **Pauline Method of Evangelism/Gospel Preaching.**

### **I. What is obvious is that there is a contrast – what is the contrast?**

His style of communication **contrasted** with the **current method of communication** that influenced **Greek** culture and **the current expectations** of the Jewish people.

The **Greeks** had a passionate pursuit of philosophical intellectualism. They wanted to be motivated by spellbinding, eloquent orators using clever arguments

The Jews were looking for a mighty political Redeemer – the Messiah – who would break the bondage of the Jewish people from Gentile domination and oppression.

However, the message Paul preached not only was totally opposite of anything that would have ever expected – it blew their minds.

**Paul makes it very clear that his message was the last thing they would have ever believed!**

**Let me explain** – When we preach the Gospel/Cross today there is something that is distinctly missing within the **ethos** (the spirit of a culture) of our age. In one way, we can't help it! You say, what is it?

**In 337 AD** (1700 years ago) crucifixion became an obsolete form of execution when it was outlawed by the Roman emperor – Constantine. So, as an effect, crucifixion was eradicated from human culture. Think about it, when was the last time you saw a criminal executed in public by being nailed to a tree? It's really not a part of our psyche!

So, as a result when we preach the Cross today we don't really **feel** or **sense** what they would have felt or sensed in ancient times. That is, **crucifixion created an atmosphere of shame!**

*The famous Roman philosopher, Cicero, called the cross "the tree of shame!" He later stated; "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears."*

*The Jewish historian, Josephus, called crucifixion – 'the most wretched of deaths.'*

**The writer of Hebrews mentions the word shame twice in his book with regards to the crucifixion of Jesus:**

*If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

**Heb. 6:6**

*"... Jesus...endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." **Heb. 12:2***

So, in NT times, they had an atmosphere that we do not have today!

This helps us understand why the **Greeks** saw it as **foolishness** and why the **Jews** experienced it as a **stumblingblock**.

*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness **1:24***

**A. From the standpoint of the pagan Gentile, you would have to be a moron to believe eternal comes through the crucifixion!**

To the Greeks and the Romans – the gods were immortal. They had nothing in common with the cross! How could intelligent people believe that a crucified Jew who died as a common criminal be a Divine Being? More than that – to claim that He is God’s Son - the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Coming Judge of the world – an educated man would have thought of this as utter **madness**.

**Justin Martyr** (the earliest Christian apologist – b. 103 AD) said the Christian message was described as **madness**:

*They say that our madness consists in the fact that we put a crucified man in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of the world.*

A famous Roman politician and pagan writer who lived in the time of John – **Pliny the Younger** – he described Christianity as a ***perverse and extravagant superstition***.

So, for the Romans to honor one as a god who had been nailed to a cross by the Romans as a criminal was insanely crazy – you had to be a moron to believe it!

**B. From the standpoint of the religious Jew, the cross was a stumblingblock!**

A stumblingblock was something that would cause a person to trip up and fall – in this case it would cause someone to fall into unbelief! Where they say, “I can’t buy it!”

But it was even more than that – not only did they not believe in Christ – but they were aroused to **violent reactions** and **opposition** against Christ – like Paul before he was converted!

**So, why would the Jews be so reactionary? It goes back to their view of the Messiah and Deut. 21:23!**

*Messiah* meant power, splendor, and triumph – *Crucifixion* meant weakness, humiliation, and defeat. They don't go together!

**There was also the problem with Deut. 21:23**

**The Law states that if a man was hung to die on a tree – he came under the curse of God.**

*His corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.*

So, how then could God curse the Messiah (God's chosen One)? This was inconceivable – totally incredulous!

**So, when Paul preached the message of the cross to the Jews and to the Gentiles – he could not have preached anything worse! However, we see from history that this message transformed the world. Total Contrast!**

**II. What are the distinguishable characteristics?**

**A. His Gospel Preaching was a Declaration**

**Declare** - to tell plainly, openly, aloud. **Testimony** - witness.

**It means to openly and plainly declare what we know based on what we've experienced.**

It's like a **soldier** describing the horrors of the war or a **doctor** telling us about an operation he had performed. It's the accurate eyewitness report of a **newspaper**. It's like listening to a **sports announcer** on the radio telling us about the game.

*When we preach the Gospel we are **declaring a historical story.***

This was the primary method Paul used when he preached on his missionary journeys. *“And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”*  
Acts 17:2

Not all pastors do regular Gospel preaching because their approach to the message is not one of declaration.

*The commonly accepted preaching prior to the Great Awakening of the 1740s was not calculated to break through the prevailing formalism and indifference among the hearers. Preaching that brought men to a sense of need and humiliation before God was of a very different order. The greatest practical lesson from the 1735 revival for the pulpit of our day is that when ministers have to deal with indifference and unconcern they will simply beat the air unless they begin where the Holy Spirit begins, When he is come he will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. – Iain Murray, Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography , 1987, p. 125, 130*

Our primary role in preaching is to **awaken** the **conscience** through **truth**. The ultimate goal is to bring the human will to faith and obedience.

*The most successful method of preaching is that which aims at a thorough and radical convictions of sin. The law must be applied with power to the conscience, or the preciousness of grace will be very inadequately known. – James Henley Thornwell*

*The pastor is to work upon the will and the affections and by savoury, powerful, and affectionate application of the truth delivered, to chase into the heart, to woo and win the soul to the love and liking, the approbation and practice of doctrine which is according to godliness. – Thomas Hooker, 1648*

*When ministers were under the special influences of the Spirit of God, it assisted them to come at the consciences of men, and as it were to handle them with hands: whereas, without the Spirit of God, said he, whatever*

*reason and oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps, instead of hands. – Jonathan Edwards*

## 2. What is the story?

It is the **redemptive implications** of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

*For I **determined** not to **know** any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*

**(determined)** to make a distinction and then a decision - to divide and decide. It's like slicing a piece of cake or pizza to eat. To judge!

**(know)** to perceive with outward senses especially the eyes.

Paul is saying that that he has made a conscientious decision that there is only one primary thing he wants people to see: **the redemptive purposes of the life and death of Jesus Christ.**

By His miraculous birth, His humble home, His perfect life, He became an acceptable Lamb without spot or blemish. By His powerful miracles, He proved Himself to be the promised Messiah and our Redeemer. Through His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, He took our sins and bore our sorrows.

**Gospel preaching is declaring the redemptive purposes of the life and death of Jesus Christ.**

@ How many times have I seen pulpits with a bronze engraved placard that has John 12:21 – **“Sirs, we would see Jesus.”**

@ “A certain church had a beautiful stained-glass window just behind the pulpit. It depicted Jesus on the cross. On Sunday there was a guest minister preaching who was much shorter in stature than the regular pastor. A little girl listened to the guest preacher for a time, then turned to her mother and asked; “Mommy, where is that other man who usually stands there so we can't see Jesus.”

## **B. His Gospel Preaching Was a Demonstration**

**Demonstration** – put on display like an exhibition; God shows off the power of the Holy Spirit through the Cross.

Gospel preaching is the tool God uses to raise the dead, heal the crippled, and giving sight to the blind. It is the channel of God's miracles!

Paul says that it is through this avenue that God manifests his power.

*The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the **eloquence** of the preacher, otherwise men would be 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 died, 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. – C.H. Spurgeon*

\*\*\*\* **Paul is driving at a main point in this part of his epistle.** The church at Corinth had fallen back into their old, pre-conversion way of thinking. They were dividing into sides over human philosophy. "I am of Paul, I am of Peter, I am of Apollos."

**Paul's point of argument and rebuke is over the nature of salvation.**

- 1. Are men converted by the persuasive, philosophical powers of a preacher or by the Spirit of God?**
- 2. Has God given universal grace to all men to believe so that the call of God comes merely through the persuasive preacher as he exerts a moral influence on their understanding and will?**
- 3. In other words, does the power and strength and responsibility to convert rest on the persuasive powers of the preacher?**

*And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom,*

*but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 2:3-5*

**Is it the message alone that saves or must there be the inner working and influence of the Spirit of God into a man's life before he can believe?**

*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14*

**You cannot be saved without preaching but you are not saved by preaching alone!**

*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 1Th. 1:5*

**Can a man with a predisposed, wicked heart chose to love God on his own?**

*But the carnal mind is at enmity with God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Romans 8:7*

**Can a man turn to God apart from intervening grace? Who makes the move first in salvation – God or man?**

*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. John 6:44*

*As Edwards defines ability or power (the ability to do as one pleases) the sinner's difficulty is not in a **proper inability to embrace the Savior**, it is in a **proper unwillingness to do so**. That unwillingness is not because of a lack of ability to function willfully; it is because the will is without a holy, beautiful object to embrace...The real difficulty is not a person's inability to will or choose; it is his utter blindness to Christ. How can one choose what he does not perceive as extant?*

*Evangelistic preaching counts on the unbelievers' ability to embrace Jesus as Savior to be turned into a saving willingness as the Holy Spirit romances them.*

If I have earnestly preached the Gospel and no one gets saved have I failed? Did Paul condemn himself for the lack of results? If so, what did Paul mean when he said; "to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God ...For you see your calling brethren?"

**Here's the whole point:** It was not Paul, it was not Peter, and it was not Apollos who saved the Corinthians. **It was God!**

*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. **1 Corinthians 3:5-8***

Salvation is of the Lord! It is a demonstration of His power! Therefore, don't be carnal and divisive and factional.

Does the natural mind of man have an innate love for God? Does He desire to subject himself to God's laws? Romans 8: -

What happened when Adam sinned? Is grace necessary to believe? Is grace enabling? Is grace bestowed upon all men or is it selective? If it is selective, then why?

Then there are those who believe men are incapable of believing because they have no heart or desire for God. The innate principle of sin that dwells in us is self-love. It doesn't mean that men don't have the power to choose. They can only do what they are disposed to do and that is sin. They can't come to God apart from God's renewing grace. This is impart through the preaching of the Word of God.

\* Preaching is the tool that God uses to call men to salvation. (1:23-24) “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The word for “called” always refers to salvation. By our own natural ability we have no power to come to God on our own. We must be called by God

(2:14) “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” Their preaching was simply the tool that God used to call men to faith. This is his point: “

This has been a issue throughout church history. Can a man be saved without the supernatural work of God. For example, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century a man by the name of Pelagius taught that Adam was created by God but he was not endowed with any original righteousness. In his original state, he was neither holy or sinful, but with the capacity to either good or evil. He had a free and undetermined will which enabled him to choose with equal facility either of the alternatives: good or evil. The point is that his fall into sin injured no one but himself. There was no transmission of a sinful nature or of guilt, and consequently no such thing as original sin. All men are born in the same condition as Adam before the fall. He admitted that sin is universal but only because of wrong education, bad examples, or long established habits of sinning. Point: Man does not need the inward working and influence of the Spirit of God to incline his will and empower the man to turn to God.