

First Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul's method of communication stated—2:1-2

- 1) How? ¹ *And I* (emphatic), *when I came to you^{pl}, brothers*, (from Athens, cf. Acts 18:1)
 - a) Negatively—*did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom*
 - i) Not like the pretentious public speeches the Corinthian people were used to.
 - b) Positively—*as I proclaimed to you^{pl} the testimony of God.*
 - i) To announce publicly with solemnity what the true God alone has revealed about what He has done regarding salvation. God is not attempting to negotiate a treaty with sinful people!
 - ii) The true gospel always points beyond people to God.
- 2) Why? ² *For I decided to know nothing among you^{pl} ...*
 - a) Generally: the person of Christ—*except Jesus Christ*
 - b) Specifically: the work of Christ—*and this One crucified.*
 - c) This is clearly hyperbole, as observed by all the issues Paul addresses in this letter.
 - d) Paul is not anti-intellectual, but rather opposed to intellectual vanity. Too often “only Christ, only the cross” is an excuse for sloppy preparation and presentation.

Paul's method of communication restated—2:3-5

- 1) How?
 - a) Positively—³ *And I* (emphatic) *was with you^{pl} in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.*
 - i) Weakness—cf. 2nd Corinthians 10:10; 11:30; 12:5, 9-10; 13:4, 9; Galatians 4:13-14
 - ii) Fear and trembling—cf. 2nd Corinthians 7:15; Ephesians 6:5; Philippians 2:12
 - iii) These things detract from respect in the eyes of others. They are the opposite of self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency.
 - iv) **Question:** Might experiencing no fear indicate that one has forgotten how much is at stake when the Word is taught?
 - b) Contrasted—⁴ *And my speech and my preaching ...* (cf. 1:21; 15:14; 2nd Timothy 4:17; Titus 1:3)
 - i) Negatively—*were not in persuasive words of wisdom,*
 - (1) Paul was not against education and appropriate studying, but against competitive, self-absorbed speakers. Today this may include the use of special lighting, music, and video effects.
 - ii) Positively—*but in evidence/proof of the Spirit and power,*
 - (1) The proof of God's power is in changed lives for the glory of God.
- 2) Why? ⁵ *so that your^{pl} faith ...*
 - a) Negatively—*would not be in human wisdom*
 - i) Genuine faith is not based on an entertaining or compelling speaker.
 - b) Positively—*but in the power of God.* (cf. 1:18, 24)
 - i) God's power overrides the weakness of the preacher.

Take-home truth: If people are simply impressed with the skills of the speaker, they are not appropriately impressed with God.