

**Preaching Christ in the Power of
the Spirit: *A Biblical Theology of Christ-
Centered Expository Preaching***

EXALTING CHRIST PUBLISHING

710 BROADWAY STREET

VALLEJO, CA 94590

707-553-8780

www.cbcvallejo.org

Ordering email: publications@cbcvallejo.org

Copyright ©February 2003 STEVE FERNANDEZ

Printed by permission only

Revised 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Preaching Christ In The Power Of The Spirit: A Biblical Theology Of Christ-Centered Expository Preaching	
I The Purpose Of Preaching: Preaching Is To Glorify God.	3
And Exalt The Person And Work Of Christ	
II The Preeminence Of Preaching: Preaching Is To Be Christ-Centered.....	13
III The Practice And Principles Of Expository Preaching:.....	27
Preaching Is To Be Expository	
IV The Pattern Of Apostolic Preaching, Part 1:	31
The Spirit And The Proclamation Of The Word (1 Thessalonians 1:5)	
V The Pattern Of Apostolic Preaching, Part 2:	41
The Spirit And The Reception Of The Word (1 Thessalonians 1:6)	
VI Preaching Christ: Exalting Christ In Cross-Centered, Spirit-Empowered.	49
Preaching, Wiser Than Men Stronger Than Men, Part 1 (1 Corinthians 1:17-25)	
VII Preaching Christ: Exalting Christ In Cross-Centered, Spirit-Empowered.	61
Preaching, Wiser Than Men Stronger Than Men, Part 2 - 1 Corinthians 1:26-31	
VIII The Power Of The Spirit: Wiser Than Men Stronger Than Men.	73
(1 Corinthians 2:1-5)	
IX The Power Of Preaching: Preaching Is To Be Spirit-Empowered.....	79
X The Passion Of Preaching: Preaching Is To Be Whole-Hearted.	87
XI The Presuppositions Of Preaching: Preaching Is To Be Soul-Piercing.	93
XII The Preached Word: The Inescapable Mandate (2 Timothy 4:1-5)	99

INTRODUCTION

PREACHING CHRIST IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORY PREACHING

So often when people are asked to lecture or to speak on preaching they rush immediately to consider methods and ways and means and the mechanics. I believe that is quite wrong. We must start with the presuppositions and with the background, and with general principles; for unless I am very greatly mistaken, the main trouble arises from the fact that people are not clear in their minds as to what preaching really is.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p.10

I. THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING

Preaching is to Glorify God and Exalt the Person and Work of Christ

The primary purpose of preaching is to exalt and glorify God's majestic person and work. The majesty and glory of God is revealed primarily through the person and work of Christ who is Himself God incarnate. Therefore, preaching is to glorify God by exalting the person and work of Christ. When Christ is set forth people are delivered, convicted, comforted, encouraged, and transformed all to the glory of Christ.

II. THE PREEMINENCE OF PREACHING

Preaching is to be Christ-Centered

III. THE PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Preaching is to be Expository

IV. THE PATTERN OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING, PART 1

The Spirit and the Proclamation of the Word

V. THE PATTERN OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING, PART 2

The Spirit and the Reception of the Word

VI. PREACHING CHRIST: WISER THAN MEN STRONGER THAN MEN, PART 1

Preaching Christ is more able to help men and penetrate the culture than anything men can come up with.

VII. PREACHING CHRIST: WISER THAN MEN STRONGER THAN MEN, PART 2

Preaching Christ is more able to help men and penetrate the culture than anything men can come up with.

VIII. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: WISER THAN MEN STRONGER THAN MEN

IX. THE POWER OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED

Preaching is not to be done with oratorical display, but by a plainness of speech and with a sense of weakness that utterly depends on the power of the Holy Spirit.

X. THE PASSION OF PREACHING Preaching is to be Whole-Hearted

Preaching is to be done with a whole-hearted earnestness. A consciousness of the presence of God and the good of men is ever to be kept in mind. It is to be done with a seriousness that does not trifle with the Word of God.

XI. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF PREACHING Preaching is to be Soul-Piercing

Preaching is to be done with an awareness of the deadness and hardness of the unregenerated human heart and the coldness of heart that Christians are often subject to. It is to be done with an awareness that God must move on the heart (2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:4-5). It must be done with the understanding that even in Christians God must work for "it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The preacher must consciously aim to go beyond the head to the heart. We must remember: "*The fixedness of the human mind is the wall of Jericho to gospel preaching. God must shake or there will be no shaking.*"

Jim Elliott

XII. THE PREACHED WORD The Inescapable Mandate

THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND EXALT THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

What is the purpose of preaching? What is its primary, fundamental objective? The purpose of preaching is to magnify God's glory and to exalt the person and work of Christ. In doing so, it brings the glories of the all-sufficiency of Christ's person to bear in the practical workings of day-in, day-out living! There are at least two aspects to the purpose of preaching.

I. TO PURSUE A GOD-GLORIFYING CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE.

A. The Repeated Theme Of Scripture Is God's Commitment To Magnify His Own Name And Glory Through Christ. His Ultimate Aim Must Be Our Ultimate Aim As Well In Preaching.

- 1. God's own zeal for His name and glory is the primary motive for all He does (Isaiah 48:9-11; Ezekiel 20:44, 36:18-32).**
- 2. God's saving and sanctifying work in Christ is designed to display His glory and excellencies (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; 1 Peter 2:9; John 12:27, 17:1-4).**

- a. God chose us, redeemed us, and gave us an inheritance in order to magnify His glory (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). It is His ultimate goal. How much more should it be our goal in preaching as well?

My burden is to plead for the supremacy of God in preaching – that the dominant note of preaching be the freedom of God's sovereign grace, the unifying theme be the zeal that God has for His own glory, the grand object of preaching the infinite and inexhaustible being of God, and the

pervasive atmosphere of preaching be the holiness of God. Then when job, leisure, friendships, or the crises of our day – AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty, hunger, and worst of all, unreached peoples of the world, these matters are not only taken up, they are taken all the way up to God.

Piper, *The Supremacy of God In Preaching*, p. 20

- b. Paul put Christ at the center of everything, even marriage and family (Ephesians 5:22-6:4).

3. The basic subject matter of preaching must be Christ's glorious person and work and its bearing on lives, not a doctrinal system (though doctrine is vital).

We are not going to fight this modern battle successfully by repeating the sermons of the Puritans verbatim, or adopting their classifications and sub-divisions, and their manner of preaching. That would be futile. We must learn to hold on to the old principles but we must apply them, and use them, in a manner that is up-to-date. Forgive a personal reference. I am going to do what the Apostle did in the eleventh chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. I am going to be a fool, and to say something about myself. I remember how, in the very first year when I began to preach, I was preaching in a service with an old preacher who was over eighty years of age. Having listened to my feeble effort, and having heard me for the first time, the old man made this comment which encouraged me very greatly. He said, 'Though you are a young man you are preaching the old truths, but you have put a very modern suit on them'. That is what I am trying to say. We need the old truths in a modern suit. You must not clothe them in the old staid terminology or manner or method that was appropriate in the past. The moment we become slaves to any system—I do not care how good it was in its age and generation— we are already defeated...We need the truth that was preached by the Puritans, but preached in a manner that will show its relevance, its adaptability to the most urgent modern situation. God forbid that our methods should deny the very message we are trying to preach, either by imitating the latest methods of worldly entertainment or by methods that are so archaic as to make our message irrelevant.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Ephesians, The Christian Soldier*,
Volume XIII, pp. 290-291

- a. The dominant emphasis is His sovereign grace and mercy to sinners (Ephesians 2: 4-10, 3:8, Romans 15:8-9).
- b. The object is to unfold the specific aspects of His wondrous being (Romans 8:31-39, 9:22-24; John 1:14, 16; 1 Peter 2:9) and show how they bear on practical daily living (Philippians 4:13, 19).

4. Christ-centered preaching doesn't ignore the fact that preaching is to be exegetical: that is, the original meaning of the text must be the basis of preaching.

True, biblical, preaching is expository. It brings out the meaning and application of the text or texts of Scripture. However, Christ-centered preaching recognizes the biblical reality that Christ is the over-arching theme of the Scriptures. Therefore, if He is not directly in a text, He is there indirectly by inference and application. Because of progressive revelation, and because its end and goal is Christ, Christ casts His shadow backwards on all Scripture – so He is there at least in the application of all Scripture (Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 1:45, 5:39; Acts 3:18, 24, 10:43).

B. The Reality Of Christ's Glorious Person And Saving Work – First For The Believer On The Cross, And Then, Second In The Believer By The Spirit – Must Be The Focus Of Preaching, Since It Is The Focus Of Scripture (Luke 24:44; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Colossians 1:29; Galatians 6:14-16).

The fact that Christ's person and work is the focus of Scripture is most clearly seen in the New Covenant. Paul was a minister of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6). We are also ministers of the New Covenant. The New Covenant, through and through, centers on the person and work of Christ. Therefore, we must be Christ-centered in our preaching.

- 1. The glory of the New Covenant is the glory of the person and work of Christ. First, in His justifying and pardoning of sinners (Hebrews 8:12). Then, it is seen in His regenerating and transforming work as well (Hebrews 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:6-18).**

Such is this constitution of the person of Christ, wherein the glory of all the holy properties and perfections of the divine nature is manifested, and does shine forth. So speaks the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." This glory which we behold, is the glory of the face of God in Jesus Christ, (chap. Iv. 6,) or the glorious representation which is made of him in the person of Christ, whereof we shall treat afterward. The glass wherein this glory is represented unto us – proposed unto our view and contemplation – is divine revelation in the Gospel. Herein we behold it, by faith alone. And those whose view is steadfast, who most abound in that contemplation by the exercise of faith, are thereby "changed into the same image, from glory to glory" – or are more and more renewed and transformed into the likeness of God, so represented unto them.

Owen, Vol. I, p.51

- 2. The glory of Christ in His infinite perfections is 'seen' in true conversion (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).**
- 3. The modern tendency to moralistic, psychologized, man-centered sermons must be rejected.**

If Christ is not brought into a message, it is mere moralistic preaching. Or, in the case of Old Testament preaching, it is simply a Jewish sermon. Furthermore, if Christ isn't "beheld" in a sermon through exposition of Scripture, there is no means or basis of transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The preacher, standing here as he does to-day before this immense assembly, knows that without God's looking upon the ministry it will be vain and void. How shall God's eye be secured? – how shall his presence be guaranteed? If in this pulpit Christ be set forth, God will look down upon that Christ set forth, and honour and bless the Word. Brethren, I might preach clear doctrine, but God might never look

down upon doctrine; for I could point you to churches with a tear in my eye, because I am able to do so, where conversions are rare things. The doctrine is high, high enough; perhaps so high as to have become putrid. I will not say that, but I do know some churches where there has not been an addition to the church by the stretch of ten or a dozen years together, and I have known the reason.

Christ was not set forth, and, therefore God did not look down on what was set forth, because it was the wrong thing. I have known, too, churches—and with equal sorrow so I mention them—where practice has been preached, but not Christ. People have been exhorted to do ten thousand things; moral duties, presented before the people in pleasing and well-polished essays have taken the place of the cross of Christ and there have been no conversions.

Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume VII*, p. 206

C. The Relevancy Of God-Glorifying Christ-Centered Preaching.

1. It is relevant to personal needs and daily living (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Notice that the author of Hebrews immediately applies to Christ what he has just said about faith in God in his references from the Old Testament in chapter 11. He does this by stating that believers should be, "fixing our eyes on Jesus" in 12:1-3. In other words, in the thinking of the author of Hebrews, even though Christ is not directly mentioned in the Old Testament, he believes that He is there both by inference and application.

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, that it suits all sorts of people. Are there rebels present? preach Christ: it will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus. Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ. Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears. Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Land

in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilized men, move off to another post and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France, the cross is adapted to all. We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am sure Christ will suit them. If they are low, if they be true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit them. No Christians will reject such meat as this; only prepare it, and with a hot heart serve it up on the table, and they will be satisfied and feed to the full. So that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

Spurgeon, *Volume III*, pp. 174-175

2. It is relevant to the spread of the gospel in missions (Acts 9:16, 15:14, 21:13; 3 John 5-8).

The preaching of Christ is adapted to reaching all peoples. The word 'Gentiles' [ethnos] in Acts 15:14 (and elsewhere) is the word from which we get the word 'ethnic.' It refers to all the people groups of the world as distinguished by their peculiar languages and cultures. Preaching Christ is suited to reach all peoples irrespective of culture.

3. God, through the Spirit, always honors Christ-centered, cross-saturated preaching (John 16:14-15).

If the Spirit is to work, Christ must be "placarded." He must be proclaimed to believers (Colossians 1:27-29) and set forth to non-believers (Galatians 3:1). If Christ is not set forth, there is no basis for the hearing of faith for the non-believer (Romans 10:17) and no object of faith and basis of transformation for the believer (2 Corinthians 3:18). There is no basis of conviction and heart-work by which the Spirit works. In other words, we are to placard Christ to the nonbeliever, and proclaim Christ to the believer, confident that Christ has His own irresistible power of attraction and that the Spirit was sent to manifest this very thing. Spurgeon points this out,

Now, my brethren, part of the attractive power of the gospel lies in the attracting people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the gospel if they do not hear it. One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these

times, 'How are we to get the working-classes to listen to the word?' The answer is, Christ is his own attraction, Christ is the only trumpet that you want ... trumpet Christ. Preach the gospel, and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation is to do this. 'Oh!' said a Socinian once, to a good Christian minister, 'I cannot make it out; my chapel is always empty, and yours is always crammed full. And yet I am sure mine is the more rational doctrine, and you are not by any means so talented a preacher as I am' – 'Well,' said the other, 'I will tell you the reason why your chapel is empty, and mine is full. The people have a conscience, and that conscience tells them that what I preach is true, and that what you preach is false, so they will not hear you'.

You shall look through the history of this realm ever since the commencement of the days of Protestantism, and I will dare to say it without fear of contradiction, that you will almost in every case find that the men who have attracted the greatest mass of people to hear them, have been men who were the most evangelical – who preached the most about Christ and him crucified.

Spurgeon, Volume III, pp. 261-262

Compare Spurgeon's confidence in the attracting power of Christ, plainly and directly preached, with the indirect approach below that decentralizes Christ and the gospel.

You cannot start with a text, expecting the unchurched to be fascinated by it. You must first capture their attention, and then move them to the truth of God's Word. By starting with a topic that interests the unchurched and then showing what the Bible says about it, you can grab their attention, disarm prejudices, and create an interest in the Bible that wasn't there before.

Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, p. 295

Unchurched people today are the ultimate consumers. We may not like it, but for every sermon we preach, they're asking, "Am I interested in the subject or not?" If they aren't, it doesn't matter how effective our delivery is; their minds will check out.

Bill Hybels, et al., Mastering Contemporary Preaching, p.27

Spurgeon speaks elsewhere of the characteristics of Christ-centered preaching that is honored by God through the Spirit.

The secret being that God will not look down on any man's ministry unless that man sets forth what God sets forth, even Christ Jesus as the propitiation for sin. It is not a question as to whether there will be conversions when Christ is set forth; that is certain. Some good brethren quote the text, 'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but' – and they are a long while upon the 'but', and they pervert the text a little, 'but God gives the increase.' Now the text does not say any such thing. It says, 'Paul planteth, and Apollos watereth; God giveth the increase'. They are all linked together; Paul does not plant in vain, Apollos does not water in vain; God gives the increase – sure to do it, and if there be not souls saved, there is always some reason for it: and the reason to which I would look – leaving now the inscrutable sovereignty of God out of the question for a moment – the reason would be either that Christ is not preached, or else he is preached in such a way as he never ought to be preached – with cold-heartedness, with want of zeal, with want of tenderness. Only let Christ be preached with an earnest heart, though there be no eloquence, though the elocution be defective, Christ being set forth, God the Holy Spirit will come forth too, and the Word must and will be blessed. His Word shall not return unto him void; it shall prosper in the thing where he hath sent it.

Spurgeon, Volume VII, p. 207

II. TO PLACARD AND PROCLAIM THE GLORIES OF THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR IN CHRIST-CENTERED, GOD-GLORIFYING PREACHING.

A. There Is The Proclamation Of Christ's Justifying Grace (Romans 5:15-17), And The Establishment Of Christ's Lordship In The Lives Of Sinners (Isaiah 52:7; John 1:14, 16; Romans 10:15-17, 21; Philippians 4:23; 1Thessalonians 5:28).

- 1. There is the proclamation that God has vindicated the dishonoring of His glorious name through the redemption and grace that is in Christ (Romans 3:23-26).**

Christ's death made propitiation by which God's wrath has been satisfied, His justice maintained and the infinite worth of His glory upheld (John 17:1-5, 12:28; Romans 3:23-26; Hebrews 2:17, 9:26, 10:10, 12).

Therefore, based upon Christ's propitiation, there is a free and full pardon in Christ by His atonement (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 10:42-43, 11:18). There is also a free imputation of His perfect righteousness. As a result of both, God justifies freely and forever the sinner who places their faith (Romans 3:24-26, 4:5-6, 5:1) in Christ.

It horribly skews the meaning of the cross when contemporary prophets of self-esteem say that the cross is a witness to my infinite worth, since God was willing to pay such a high price to get me. The biblical perspective is that the cross is a witness to the infinite worth of God's glory, and a witness to the immensity of the sin of my pride. What should shock us is that we have brought such contempt upon the worth of God that the very death of his Son is required to vindicate that worth. The cross stands in witness to the infinite worth of God and the infinite outrage of sin.

Piper, *The Supremacy of God In Preaching*, p. 32

- 2. There is God's prerogative over sinners and the establishment of Christ's lordship in the lives of those who exercise repentant faith (Acts 2:32-39, 20:21; Romans 1:5, 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 3:14-15).**
- B. There Is The Proclamation Of The Sufficiency Of Christ For The Establishment And Maturity Of His People (Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:28).**
- 1. Christ is to be preached as 'gospel' or good news to His people. He is all that they need to be delivered, restored, and made whole (Romans 16:25).**

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept for long ages past.(Romans 16:25).

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. (Colossians 1:28).

- 2. There is the sufficiency of Christ's grace for the sustaining, persevering and empowering of His people (Romans 5:2; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 4:16).**

C. The Purpose Of Preaching Is To Exalt And Magnify The Glory Of His Name In Both His Justifying And Sanctifying Grace.

- 1. His own commitment is to make His name and glory known (1 Samuel 12:22; Psalm 25:11, 79:9; Jeremiah 13:11; Romans 9:17; Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14)**
- 2. His own commitment is to glorify His name through the person and work of Christ. God honors Christ-centered preaching (John 12:27-28, 17:2-3).**
- 3. His own commitment is to glorify His name by the magnifying of grace and mercy (Romans 3:24-26, 15:8-9; Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).**

THE PREEMINENCE OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE CHRIST-CENTERED

So often when people are asked to lecture or to speak on preaching they rush immediately to consider methods and ways and means and the mechanics. I believe that is quite wrong. We must start with the presuppositions and with the background, and with general principles; for unless I am very greatly mistaken, the main trouble arises from the fact that people are not clear in their minds as to what preaching really is.

Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p.10

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS: WHAT IT IS NOT AND WHAT IT IS.

A. What It Is Not.

1. An attempt to force Christ into texts when He is not there.

... also Christ-centered preaching rightly understood does not seek to discover where Christ is mentioned in every text but to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ. The grace of God culminating in the person and work of Jesus unfolds in many dimensions throughout the pages of Scripture. The goal of the preacher is not to find novel ways of identifying Christ in every text (or naming Jesus in every sermon) but to show how each text manifests God's grace in order to prepare and enable his people to embrace the hope provided by Christ.

Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, p. 279

2. An approach to Scripture that undermines a literal grammatical historical interpretation of Scripture: It is not a new hermeneutic.

B. What It Is.

- 1. A recognition in doing the work of expository preaching that divine revelation, of which Scripture consists, is progressive and telic in nature. That is, it is accumulative and its goal is Christ. This in turn means that earlier revelation, is only understood or applied by the latter, fuller revelation of Christ.**

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. (1 Peter 1:10-11).

- 2. A recognition of the central role of the entire broad, biblical context in interpretation. That the broad, biblical context is vital in the understanding and application of Scripture.**
- 3. A recognition of Christ's own assertion that He is the theme and goal of revelation (Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 1:45, 5:39; Acts 3:18, 24, 10:43).**

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:27).

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:44-47).

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45).

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me. (John 5:39).

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. (Acts 3:18, 24).

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.(Acts 10:43).

The re-enthroning of the Person, Spirit, Grace, and Authority of Christ, in the hearts and consciences of men, is the only way whereby an end may be put unto these woeful conflicts. ... so it is the highest duty of them unto whom he is precious, whose principal design is to be found built on him as the sure foundation, as to hold the truth concerning him, (the person, spirit, grace, office, and authority) and to abound in all duties of faith, love, trust, honour, and delight in him – so also to declare his excellency, to plead the cause of his glory, to vindicate his honour, and to witness him the only rest and reward of the souls of men, as they are called and have opportunity.

Owen, Vol. I, p.5

4. A recognition that any interpretation and/or application without Christ is sub-Christian.

A message that merely advocates morality and compassion remains sub-Christian even if the preacher can prove that the Bible demands such behaviors. By ignoring the sinfulness of humankind, which makes even our best works tainted before God (Isa. 64:6; Luke 17:10), and by neglecting the grace of God, which makes obedience possible and acceptable (I Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:8-9), such messages necessarily subvert the Christian message. By themselves, moral maxims and advocacy of ethical conduct fall short of the requirements of biblical preaching. A textually accurate discussion of biblical commands does not guarantee Christian orthodoxy. Exhortations for moral behavior apart from the work of the Savior degenerate into mere Pharisaism, even if preachers advocate the actions with selected biblical evidence and good intent. Spirituality based on personal conduct cannot escape its human-centered orbit though it aspires to lift one to the divine.

Chapell, p. 274

II. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

A. The Sinfulness And Fallenness Of Man In His Rebellion, Incompleteness, And Deficiencies Is Directly Stated Or Implied In All Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- 1. There is a mutual problem of remaining sinfulness and lack of Christ-likeness in the people of the original text narrative etc., which reflects our present need as well.**
- 2. Paul used the Old Testament this way. It was written for us. (1 Corinthians 9:9-11, 10:6-11; Romans 15:4-5).**

Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:5-13).

B. The Sufficiency Of Christ Is The Provision For Every Aspect Of Sinfulness And Human Deficiency. It Is Either Revealed Directly, Or Reflected And Implied Indirectly, In Every Text. This Is In Order That People Can Be What They Cannot Be On Their Own Without Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).

Our fallenness, deficiencies, weaknesses, etc. all point to Christ's all-sufficient provision (John 1:14-16; Colossians 1:28-29; John 15:5; Ephesians 3:16).

C. The Sole Instrumentality Of Bringing Christ's Provision And Solution To Bear, Is The Word Of God Brought Home Through The Presence And Power Of The Spirit Of God (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Peter 1:1, 23-25).

- 1. The Word of God, centered upon Christ, is the divinely ordained means of transformation and maturity to glorify His Son and advance the gospel in the world (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:28; Romans 16:25).**
- 2. We are transformed as we behold the Lord (Christ) in the mirror of the Word (2 Corinthians 3:18). If we are not shown Christ in the Scripture, even by application, then there can be no transformation. We behold Christ in the fulness of His attributes and perfections, and by application they are shown to be suitable to our specific needs and deficiencies (John 1:14; Philippians 4:13, 19).**

III. THE PRIORITY OF CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

A. It Safeguards Us From The Danger And Tendency Of "Christian" Moralistic Messages.

1. Ignoring our sinfulness and the enabling grace of Christ in the practice of any biblical command or precept is moralistic and less than Christian — it is "solabootstrapa."

- a. Biographical sermons: These are "be like" messages. They often miss the reason why God reveals flaws in biblical characters, which is to show the need, even of the greatest men, for Christ's enabling grace. They fail to identify the source of their steadfastness, faithfulness, etc., the source is Christ! (Hebrews 12:1-4).
- b. Ethical sermons: These are "be good" messages: Sermons which focus on some quality of virtue, but, with no reference to where the power and ability comes from. The source of holiness, including its motive, must be identified: Once again it is Christ through the Holy Spirit (John 15:5; Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:15-16).
- c. Methodical sermons: These are "be disciplined" messages. Spiritual discipline also cannot be isolated from the enabling grace found in Christ. A sermon exhorting to spiritual disciplines without Christ is legalism.

2. Carefully stating a biblical standard and behavior does not make it Christian! Moral standards, principles of conduct fall short — even in an exegetically accurate treatment of biblical commands. In the end it is human-centered when it leaves out Christ. It becomes a form of Phariseeism and legalism.

Every aspect, action, and hope of the Christian life finds its motive, strength, and source in Christ, or it is not of Christ. The truths of Scripture that do not anticipate or culminate in Christ's ministry must at least be preached as a consequence of his work, or we rip them from the context that identifies them with the Christian message.

Chapell, p. 288

"Be messages" that contain only moral instruction imply that we are able to change our fallen condition in our own strength ... However well intended, these sermons present a faith indistinguishable from that of morally conscientious Muslims, Unitarians, Buddhists, or Hindus. The distinctive of the Christian faith is that God provides the way to himself because we cannot make our way to him. This is just as true for progressive sanctification as it is for original justification. A sermon no different from a childhood imperative to be a "Do Bee" rather than a "Don't Bee" places more responsibility on a child of God than the gospel will allow.

Chapell, p. 294

B. It Aligns Us With The Spirit's Purpose And Intent In All Scripture (John 16:14-15) Which Is To Exalt And Glorify Christ In Everything.

IV. THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

A. The Progressive-Telic Nature of Biblical Revelation Bears Upon The Significance And Application Of Every Text.

- 1. It answers the question of how Christ relates to a text where He is not specifically mentioned: He is related by direct reference, or indirectly by implication, as the end and theme of all Scripture.**

For example, the story of David and Goliath:

For example, if we make a sermon on the narrative of David and Goliath, we may not isolate this narrative from the flow of redemptive

history and hold David up to the congregation as a hero whose courage we should imitate in fighting our individual Goliaths. Instead, we should endeavor to discover the meaning of this narrative in the context of the whole redemptive history...What does this story mean in the totality of God's redemptive history? Notice that David does not rely on his own strength, or weapons, or skill. David says, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel ... so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord God does not save by sword or spear, for the battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:45-47). The essence of this story, therefore, is more than Israel's king defeating the enemy; the essence is that the Lord himself defeats the enemy of his people. This theme locates this passage on the highway of God's kingdom history which leads straight to Jesus' victory over Satan...thus the battle between David and Goliath is more than a personal scrap; it is more than Israel's king defeating a powerful enemy; it is a small chapter in the battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent – a battle which reaches its climax in Jesus's victory over Satan, first with his death and resurrection, and finally at his Second Coming when Satan will be thrown "into the lake of fire and sulfur." (Rev. 20:10).

Greidanus, *Preaching Christ From the Old Testament*, pp. 238-239

2. Every text of Scripture is part of a broad biblical context — the narrative or storyline of Scripture. A storyline centered and culminating in Christ — (the study of biblical theology).

You do not explain what an acorn is, even if you say many things about it (e.g., it is brown, has a cap, is found on the ground, is gathered by squirrels), if you do not in some way relate it to an oak tree. In a similar sense, preachers cannot properly explain a seed (or portion) of biblical revelation, even if they say many true things about it, unless they relate it to the redeeming work of God that all Scripture ultimately purposes to disclose. In this sense, the entire Bible is Christ-centered because his redemptive work in all of its incarnational, atoning, rising, interceding, and reigning dimensions is the capstone of all of God's revelation of his dealings with his people. Thus, no aspect of revelation can be thoroughly understood or explained in isolation from some aspect of Christ's redeeming work.

Chapell, p. 276

NOTE: Biblical theology can be abused as easily as systematic theology. It can be abused by imposing the storyline in an undue manner that empties or ignores the clear exegesis of a particular passage.

3. Exegesis that is Christ-centered involves two facets:

- a. First is discovering the particulars of a text (what Chapell calls the magnifying glass).
- b. Second is discovering the panoramic placement of a text in broad context of Scripture (what Chapell calls the fish-eye lens). The panoramic unites and relates the details of the text to the unity of the overall work of God in general (Genesis 3:15). This means no passage can be treated in isolation from some aspect of Christ's person and work.

B. The Revelation Of God's Provision In Christ For Man's Plight Is The End And Design Of Scripture (John 1:14).

- 1. Our fallen, incomplete, sinful condition shadows, points to, or alludes to Christ. In other words, the Christian message is never self-help. He alone is the Savior, He alone is our strength, and wisdom.**

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. (John 1: 14-16).

John says we (all believers) receive from Christ's fulness, grace upon grace. That is, there is a constant resupply of Christ's provision, for our incompleteness and deficiencies, through the Word of God by the Spirit of God to His people.

2. We are to preach Christ for justification and sanctification (Romans 16:25).

Paul says we "proclaim Him" in order to bring to completeness (Colossians 1:28-29). He also says that it is "the preaching of Jesus Christ" that establishes (Romans 16:25). Peter says we "proclaim His excellencies" (1 Peter 2:9). The person of Christ in His infinite, immutable attributes is fitted and suited for all His people's needs (See Philippians 3:10, 4:13).

3. We are to preach the cross. The cross is a comprehensive term synonymous with grace, and redemption in all its aspects

To preach "the cross" does not mean to merely to preach the event. "The cross" refers to the cross in its accomplishments and its implications. Paul literally says, "This One crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). In other words, the cross cannot be preached apart from preaching the glory of His person and His incarnation! "The cross" is a synecdoche; that refers to all Christ has accomplished by His redemptive work. It includes all of what it means to preach the person and work of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:24, 15:1-4; Romans 16:25-27). It is preaching Christ in His incarnation, substitution, redemptive love, resurrection, ascension, enthronement, advocacy, and intercession: All are a result of, and flow from the cross.

V. THE PRACTICE OF CHRIST-CENTERED, EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

A. It Is Expository Preaching: It Remains Honest With The Text. It Does Not Pass By Or Diminish The Direct Message Of The Text.

1. It avoids topical or proof-texting sermons that give a meaning to the text that is not there.

2. **Its authority is the exegetical content that comes directly from Scripture itself. It brings the direct authority of the Word of God to bear in a message.**

B. It Is Christ-Centered Expository Preaching: It Relates The Text To Christ Either Directly Or Indirectly By Implication. It Reveals Or Relates A Christ-Centered Focus Consistent And Honest With The Text.

Chapell gives the following helpful observations about Christ-Centered Exposition:

1. There are texts which make a specific reference to Christ's person and or work.
2. There are texts which make a typological reference (a divinely sanctioned correspondence) to Christ's person or work.
3. There are texts which have no direct reference to Christ, but have broader contextual indications of how Christ's person and work relates to the passage.
 - a. **Predictive:** There are specific references which predict Christ's person and work (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22). There are also non-specific predicative elements: The sacrificial system, the exodus, the Passover lamb, etc.
 - b. **Preparatory:** For example the law (Galatians 3:24). There are implicit, spiritual, experimental and theological preparations for Christ.
 - c. **Reflected:** There are texts that reveal man's fallen nature and God's grace that reflect and point to the need for redemption (Romans 15:4). For example, there are many accounts where God reveals the failures of men to point to the need for Christ. These texts demonstrate that God uses sinners! He delivers those who cannot help themselves.

Since I am afflicted and needy, let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer, do not delay; O my God. (Psalm 40:17).

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?" Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:5-8).

- d. **Resultant:** Any Old Testament or New Testament passage that speaks of any privilege (as prayer), any obedience, faithfulness, patience, etc. is the result of Christ's work in and through the person (Philippians 2:13; Romans 15:17-18).

Every aspect, action, and hope of the Christian life finds its motive, strength, and source in Christ, or it is not of Christ. The truths of Scripture that do not anticipate or culminate in Christ's ministry must at least be preached as a consequence of his work, or we rip them from the context that identifies them with the Christian message.

p. 288

C. Examples Of Christ-Centered Expository Preaching.

1. The Old Testament.

Psalms 23:1-5, 28:7-9, 29:11; Isaiah 40:11, 27-31. Christ is the Shepherd who comforts. It is Christ through whom we gain new strength. It is Christ who strengthens us. Paul says, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13).

Joshua at Ai: There is always failure apart from Christ (John 15:4-5).

Judges: Samson's strength reflects the strength we receive through Christ.

1 Samuel: David's defeat of Goliath reflects Christ giving us victory over our enemies.

Genesis: The failure of Abraham reflects our need for Christ.

The Law and The Ten Commandments: The law shows our need for Christ.

It was more than a moral standard, it was a theological lens picturing the frailty of the soul.

Chapell, p. 283

2. The New Testament.

Marriage is centered around Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33). Stewardship is centered around Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9). Work is centered around Christ (Colossians 3:23-24). Faith and endurance is from Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3). General duties are fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 13:1-5, 20-21).

THE PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE EXPOSITORY

The English term "Exposition" and its word group, refers to "a discourse to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand" (Webster's New Collegiate).

I. THE MAIN FEATURES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

A. The Content Of Expository Preaching.

The content of the message comes directly from the text or texts of Scripture irregardless of length. The content of the sermon comes by explaining or laying open the meaning of the text as understood by the original author (the only true meaning). Therefore, the explanation is directly derived from the meaning of the words, the grammatical relationship of the words and phrases, and the immediate and broader context of the text or texts under consideration.

B. The Christ-Centeredness Of Expository Preaching.

Christ is the theme of Scripture and is the sole divine provision for man's fallen state and its resulting needs and deficiencies. Therefore, His "grace and truth" (John 1:14), in some aspect, must be brought to bear in every sermon. In short, the content, meaning, and explanation of a passage is related to Christ, either immediately and directly from the text itself or from the immediate or broad biblical context.

C. The Application Of Expository Preaching.

Finally the passage, or passages, is applied to the present day experience of the listeners. The application can be made throughout the unfolding of the message, not necessarily only at the end. In particular, the application is made by showing specifically how Christ, in His varied perfections, is suited to the needs of the hearer (Philippians 4:10-13, 19; 1 Peter 2:9).

D. Definitions:

Richard Mayhue, in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, p.13, offers the following minimal elements to identify expository preaching:

- ▶ The message finds its sole source in Scripture
- ▶ The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
- ▶ The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
- ▶ The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
- ▶ The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.

DA Carson defines expository preaching as follows:

(Expository preaching) is preaching whose subject matter emerges directly and demonstrably from a passage or from some passages of Scripture. In other words, its content and structure demonstrably reflect what Scripture says, and honestly seek to elucidate it ... This essential element of expository preaching does not assume that the passages of Scripture must be all contiguous, or that only systematic preaching through a book can properly be called "expository preaching." ... But one non-negotiable characteristic of expository preaching is that its subject matter emerges directly and demonstrably from Scripture.

DA Carson, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2
(Summer 1999): p. 95

Merrill Unger defines expository preaching as follows:

No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the overall context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be expository preaching ... It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. "What saith the Lord" is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and all that intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-Centered preaching.

Merrill Unger, as quoted in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, p.11

II. WHAT EXPOSITORY PREACHING IS NOT.

- ▶ A running commentary from word to word without a unifying theme and order.
- ▶ Rambling comments, offhand remarks, without exegesis.
- ▶ A mass of disconnected suggestions based on surface observations of the passage, not supported or demonstrated from content of meaning of items and use of content.
- ▶ Pure exegesis information and data without theme, order or purpose.
- ▶ A mere structural outline with few or no supporting comments.
- ▶ A topical discussion of parts of a text which leaves out the equally or even more important parts.
- ▶ Unrelated grammatical findings in a text that are organized around a centered time that comes from the text.
- ▶ Linking a number of scattered passages around a common theme but handles none of the terms in a grammatical or textual manner.

The above are by Faris Whitesell, as quoted in
Rediscovering Expository Preaching, p. 10

III. THE BENEFITS OF PREACHING EXPOSITOIRILY THROUGH A BOOK OF THE BIBLE.

DA Carson mentions the following:

- A. It Is The Method Least Likely To Stray From Scriptures.**
- B. It Teaches People How To Read Their Bible; The Truth Is Self-Evident There.**
- C. It Gives Authority To The Preached Message – Since It Is The Self-Revealed, Inerrant, Word Of God – And Confidence To The Preacher.**

- D. It Meets Needs For Relevance Without Letting The Clamor For Relevance Dictate The Message. In Other Words, It Simultaneously Meets Felt Needs While Meeting The Underlying More Basic Needs.**
- E. It Enables And Forces Preachers To Deal With Tough Or "Less Significant" Subjects, Which Often Turn Out To Be More Significant And More Edifying Than Thought!**
- F. It Ensures And Enables The Preacher To Preach The Whole Counsel Of God And Have A More Balanced Ministry.**

I would add the following benefits:

- G. It Enables The Preacher To Enjoy A Long Pastorate — Since The Preacher Never Runs Out Of Sermons — And He Then Has The Time To Train And Raise Up Leaders.**
- H. It Also Enables The Preacher To Continue To Grow And Mature Over A Lifetime So He Does Not Stagnate But Progresses In The Faith Before The Congregation.**

THE PATTERN OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING, Part 1: THE SPIRIT AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD – 1 Thessalonians 1:5

INTRODUCTION

- A. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6, Paul Explains How And Why A Person Is Brought To Christ (this is the first reference to conversion in all his letters).**
- B. The Elements Which Are Always Present, In A True Conversion (and in sanctification and growth as well), Are The Word And The Spirit.**
- C. The Emphasis Is That The Spirit Attends And Assists The Preached Word. It Is By The Spirit Through The Word That All Inward And Outward Obstacles Are Overcome And True Conversions Take Place (vv. 6-9).**
- D. It Is An Example And Pattern Of The Ministry God Uses To Move Mightily In The World.**

Paul deals first, with the Spirit in the proclamation of the Word in verse 5, and then with the Spirit in the reception of the Word in verse 6.

I. THE PERSONS THROUGH WHOM, AND UPON WHOM, THE SPIRIT WORKS IN POWER ARE STATED FIRST. OUR GOSPEL ... DID NOT COME TO YOU.

A. They Are Those Convinced And Confident Of The Power Of The Gospel From Their Own Experience. It Is Our Gospel.

It is the gospel of Christ (it is about Christ, 1 Thessalonians 3:2). It is also called the gospel of God since it originates with Him (Romans 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:2). But here it is called, "our gospel." That is, it is peculiarly Paul's by experience.

He experienced its mighty power ... tasted its sweetness, handled its strength, proved its comfort and tried its power.

C.H. Spurgeon, *Volume. XI*, p. 493

B. They Are Those Committed To Its Essential Message, Those Who Are Clear On Its Content.

1. The message of the gospel is clearly known and understood. They are clear-headed about sin and grace and justification.

2. They are aware that not all who preach a gospel preach the same gospel (Galatians 1:6-9).

C. They Are Those Centered On The Gospel And Its Truth, Not Themselves. Our Gospel Did Not Come To You.

Men are mere instruments "a voice." Notice that it is the gospel that 'comes' to people, not Paul and his associates. Paul puts himself in the background when he says the gospel came to the Thessalonians. In other words, it is Christ, not the preacher who is heralded and comes through preaching to the hearer. In Romans 16:25 Paul says, "My gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:8, 2 Corinthians 4:5).

II. THE PRIORITY OF THE WORD WHENEVER THE SPIRIT WORKS IN POWER IS STATED SECOND. OUR GOSPEL DID NOT COME TO YOU IN WORD ONLY, BUT ALSO IN POWER AND IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A. The Character Of The Scriptures As The Authoritative God-Breathed Word Of God Is Assumed (Acts 14:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

B. The Central Place Of The Word Is Affirmed.

The "Word" is a noun, 'only' is an adverb. The Word is still the main thing. The Word must remain central. If we want more of the Spirit we must have more of the Word. The Word cannot be removed without also removing the Spirit. This is the case, for the Word of God is the Spirit's sword (Ephesians 6:17). Furthermore, if you remove the Word you also remove Christ. For the Spirit works through the Word to reveal and glorify Christ (John 16:15).

C. There Is A Connection Between The Word And The Spirit That Must Not Be Severed.

The Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17). The Sword of the Spirit is the Word. The Word is the Spirit's sword, not ours! (Ephesians 6:17) The Spirit who produced the Word empowers the Word. The danger of a Word only Christianity is real. The Word without the Spirit is cold, sterile knowledge.

Those who boast of their knowledge betray their ignorance. Knowledge is not a possession to be proud of, since it brings with it so great a responsibility ... knowledge may become good or ill according to the use which is made of it ... a man may by knowing more become all the more a devil. His growing information may only increase his condemnation. It is clear, then, that knowledge is not a possession of such unmingled good that we may grow vain of it; better far will it be if the more we know the more we watch and pray. Go on and read, young man. Go on and study with the utmost diligence. The more of knowledge you can acquire the better; but take care that you do not like Sardanapalus, heap up your treasures to be your own funeral pile. Do not by a rebellious pride curdle the sweet milk of knowledge, and sour your

precious blessing into an awful curse. It is soon done, but not so soon undone ... knowledge of itself alone is as land which may either become a blooming garden or a howling wilderness. It is a sea out of which you shall bring pearls or dead men's bones. Life and death, heaven and hell are here: if it was said of old, "take heed what you hear," I also will say, "take heed what you know."

Spurgeon, *Volume XXX*, pp. 61-62

D. There Is A Conscious Awareness On The Part Of The Preacher Of The Priority Of The Word And The Inadequacy Of Substitutes If The Spirit Is To Work In Power.

There are two extremes that lead to powerless, fruitless preaching. One is the Spirit without the Word, the other is the Word without the Spirit. Ritual, music, human wisdom, eloquence, skill in language and style are inadequate. The divine power is in the Spirit joined to the Word. Preachers must be acutely aware of the need for the Spirit to work in and through the preached Word. This work of the Spirit begins in the preacher himself as the Spirit assists the heralding of the Word.

III. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT WORKING IN AND THROUGH THE MAN BY THE PREACHED WORD, DID NOT COME IN WORD ONLY, BUT ALSO IN POWER.

A. The Primary Point Concerns The Spirit's Work In Assisting And Attending The Preached Word.

1. The context does not change from the Spirit's work in the preacher to the Thessalonians reception of the Word until verse 6; there is a contrast of emphatic pronouns.

2. The contrast Paul is making is between how he preached and the preaching of his opponents. This contrast is implied when he says, "Just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake" in verse 5.

Paul, in the context, is referring to the manner of his preaching among them. It is in stark contrast to those who used the Thessalonians for their own ends.

3. The promises and descriptions in other Scriptures of the Spirit's assistance in preaching support Paul's teaching here.

- a. He gives utterance to speak as one ought to speak (Ephesians 6:19-20). Luke mentions specifically that part of the effectiveness of apostolic preaching was the manner in which they preached (Acts 14:1).
- b. The Apostles prayed for boldness by the Spirit (Acts 4:29, 31)
- c. The Spirit gives power for effectiveness in preaching (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8)

It is clear from the text, by way of practical instruction, that it is not enough to preach the gospel. Something more is wanted for the conversion of souls than even that. I have stirred you up very often to assist me, dear brethren, in training those of our young men who have been called to preach the gospel, that they may be more efficient in their ministry, and you have kindly helped me ... yet there will not be a solitary case of conversion wrought by them alone. We wish to do our best to erect fresh places of worship for this ever increasing city, and it is a happy day to me whenever I see the topstone brought out on a new House of Prayer; but not one single soul shall ever be made to rejoice in Christ Jesus by the mere fact of a place of worship being erected, or of worship being celebrated therein. We must have the energy of the Holy Ghost. There is the one all important matter. What is there practical about this? Why, then it becomes more and more imperatively necessary that we should be much in prayer to God that the Holy Ghost would come.

Charles H. Spurgeon, *Volume XI*, pp. 501-502

B. There Is A Power From The Spirit That The Preacher Is Usually Conscious Of In The Act Of Preaching.

- 1. The term for 'power' is dunamis, it refers to an inherent power which is able to accomplish an intended objective. It is a spiritual dynamic which proves that divine power is operative (Romans 1:16).**

The reference to "in power and in the Holy Spirit" shows that in Paul's mind, there must be a harmony between the nature of the content and the way it is communicated. In short, there must be a consistency between the message and the manner in which it is preached. A sobering, lofty message cannot be preached in a flippant, careless way. In other words, the Spirit works so as to attend and assist the expository preached Word, so that the message is preached as it ought to be preached: In power (Ephesians 6:19-20). As a result, Christ is glorified just as the Spirit, Himself was sent to do (John 16:15).

John Calvin says regarding 'power';

For, as we had occasion to see in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul places it in contrast with "speech" – the voice of God, as it were, living and conjoined with effect, as opposed to an empty and dead eloquence of men.

John Calvin, *Commentary on I Thessalonians*, p. 241

- 2. There is a sensible realization of the presence and assistance of supernatural power in the act of preaching.**

But there is also the actual experience of the Spirit's power in the event of preaching...the one who gives the power gets the glory.

Piper, p. 34

How the gospel worked through the preachers is explicitly stated both negatively and positively. As a dynamic power it came "not unto you in word only" ... But the gospel is not transformingly communicated through mere words, however brilliant, eloquent, or imposing they may be. Mere rhetorical skill from the spiritual dynamic of the message can never achieve such a result. With a strongly contrasting but (alla) three positive features of the preaching at Thessalonica are next enumerated. Words were used, but the message they conveyed came also "in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." Each successive term is needed to give the whole picture. The objective fact is that the message came "in power," with a spiritual dynamic which proved that divine power was operative. As they spoke the preachers were keenly conscious of the presence of this supernatural power behind their words, producing spiritual persuasiveness and penetrating conviction. Paul delights in this contrast between mere words and the dynamic of the gospel (1 Co 1:18; 2:1-4; 4:20)...The missionaries keenly felt as they preached that the message was in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. They well knew that only a power beyond themselves could accomplish the task of transforming spiritually benighted souls, and they knew that the Spirit was working through them to that end.

D. Edmond Heibert, *I Thessalonians*, pp. 53-54

C. There Is A Persuasiveness In The Act Of Preaching That Goes Beyond Mere Human Ability.

- 1. There is a 'full conviction' that attends the act of preaching. The phrase means, "perfect certitude, full conviction" – Cremer. Literally it means, "a complete carrying or bearing along."**
- 2. The Spirit's direct work and activity in the event of preaching gives the preacher a Holy Spirit produced boldness and assurance which gives a divine persuasiveness to preaching.**

Full conviction is the counterpart of misgiving or doubt. Doubt paralyzes. God does not work through a man in whose soul there are misgivings!

Denny

"Full conviction" refers to Paul himself in the event of preaching. This is seen from verse 5, where the words, "even as" refer immediately back to the description of his preaching.

The prepositions en following indicate the form and manner in which the preaching was carried on, not that in which the Thessalonians received it, which is not treated till verse 6...[it is] in the Holy Ghost – in a manner which can only be ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit. The confidence was that in which Paul Silvanous and Timotheaus preached to them...kathos...[and the following] appeal to their knowledge that the fact was so. These words restrict the foregoing to the preachers as explained above. This interpretation is fixed by kathos, referring back to the whole previous description.

Henry Alford, *I Thessalonians*, pp. 250-251

Paul does not refer to the Spirit's work in the Thessalonians until verse 6. He does not refer directly to his exemplary character until 2:1-12. At this point, in verse 5, he refers only to his preaching in order to point out that it was markedly different. He appeals to the fact that they, themselves, can confirm that he preached in the way he describes, and that it was consistent with his whole life. In other words, his unselfish and self-effacing attitude was evident in his preaching. In short, his preaching was inseparable from his life – his whole man preached, not merely his intellect. He poured himself out in his preaching as he did in his life among them.

No one questions that the Thessalonians had assurance concerning the gospel which they accepted; yet the context seems clearly to indicate that the primary reference is to the missionaries. Paul is speaking about the way the missionaries came to know the election of the Thessalonians; the reference is still to the character of the message rather than to its reception. Thus viewed, verse 5 describes the preaching and verse 6 the reception of the gospel at Thessalonica. Swete feels that "the passage will certainly gain in logical clearness by this interpretation." Ellicott holds that the effort to refer the assurance to the Thessalonians "seems to mar the correct sequence of thought, and to introduce notices of the state of the recipients which only come first into view in ver. 6."

Ellicott, quoted by D. Edmond Heibert, *I Thessalonians*, p. 55

D. There Is The Presence Of The Holy Spirit That Fills And Takes Possession Of The Preacher In The Act Of Preaching.

- 1. It is a filling that elevates the preacher and the message preached. It is a filling consciously perceived by the preacher and the listener as well.**
- 2. It is a filling of the Spirit specifically connected to powerful, Christ-honoring preaching (Acts 4:29-31).**

Acts 4:29-31 says; "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

- a. The term for filling in Acts 4:31 (πιμπλεμι) is different from the term for filling in Ephesians 5:18 (πλεραο).
- b. The term, as Luke uses it, emphasizes a filling in which there is, as it were, a taking possession of, or a gripping of the man in the event of preaching. The preacher is sensibly aware of this filling. This distinguishes it from πλεραο in Ephesians 5:18, which doesn't always necessarily involve a direct sense of the Spirit's work and empowering presence.

The following are just a few examples (see also Acts 4:8, 13:9-10, 45, 19:29) that indicate that the word, in context in Luke and Acts, emphasizes a flooding or taking possession, as it were of a person so that they are under a compelling influence, to act, speak or do whatever in their mind was required.

They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today." (Luke 5:26).

And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill ... in order to throw Him down the cliff. (Luke 4:28-29).

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in public jail. (Acts 5:17-18).

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:41-42).

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel." (Luke 1:67-68).

THE PATTERN OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING, Part 2: THE SPIRIT AND THE RECEPTION OF THE WORD – 1 Thessalonians 1:6

INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul Is Explaining Conversion – The Earliest Reference In The New Testament.**
- B. The Elements Always Present In Conversion (and in sanctification and growth as well) Are The Word And The Spirit.**
- C. He Emphasizes The Spirit's Work In The Preached Word.**
 - 1. The Spirit and the proclamation of the Word in verse 5.**
 - 2. The Spirit and the reception of the Word in verse 6.**
- D. His Example Is Of People Who Became Believers Knowing It Would Bring Hostility.**

The Spirit's work, in power and through the Word in the effectual saving reception of the Word involves a number of specific realities.

- I. THE SPIRIT'S POWER IS CONNECTED NOT ONLY TO THE WORD HERALDED BUT ALSO TO THE WORD HEARD. HAVING RECEIVED THE WORD IN MUCH TRIBULATION WITH THE JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**
 - A. The Spirit Presents The Truth Of The Revealed Written Word To The Mind And Heart Of The Hearer, Having Received The Word.**

1. **Faith comes by hearing the Word (Romans 10:17).**
2. **It is “the Word of God which you heard” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).**
3. **It is "the Word which was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25).**
4. **It is the Word that Christ explained about Himself to His disciples that set their hearts on fire (Luke 24:32).**

B. The Spirit Points To Christ In The Word

1. **The Spirit was sent to take the things of Christ and glorify Him (John 16:14-15).**
2. **Preaching must be centered upon hearing the "Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).**
3. **Christ explained His person and work from the Scripture and the disciple's hearts burned (Luke 24:26-27, 32).**

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures...they said to one another, "were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road while He was explaining the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:26-27, 32).

4. **Christ is to be placed right out in front in preaching as the crucified Savior. He is to be exalted in the full spectrum of the glories of His holiness, love, mercy and grace (Galatians 3:1).**

5. **Christ is preached in order to bring people to maturity and to experience fulness of life, We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28).**

C. The Power Of The Spirit When Joined To The Preached Word Becomes Effectual In The Heart Of The Hearer In Order To Save And Transform (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

1. **The preached Word is the place of the Spirit's power in contrast to the world's view that it is weakness (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

The Corinthians were enamored with power, and thought that power lays in eloquence, style, and human wisdom.

- a. Preaching Christ is foolishness and weakness in the world's estimate (1:18a, 21b, 23b).
- b. Preaching Christ, on the contrary, is the place of God's wisdom and power (1:18b).
- c. Preaching Christ exposes the foolishness and powerlessness of the world's wisdom, since it is unable to deliver and help people. In other words, true power and wisdom is manifested in its effect. Despite the world's estimate that preaching Christ is foolishness and weakness, it has power to save! People are, in fact, delivered and transformed.

2. **Preaching the Word in simplicity is the place where the Spirit's power is demonstrated (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).**

God's power is in the message preached, though it is that which men despise and disregard as weakness. Paul says there are two ways God's power is evident in the preached Word. This

should cause us to reject the world's methods and ways.

- a. The message itself is Christ and the cross, (v.2, cp. 1:18, 21, 24)
- b. It is a manner of preaching which refuses to rely on eloquence and words of wisdom (2:1, 3). Paul deliberately avoided those things! The persuasiveness of the preacher is not eloquence, style or delivery. Ultimately, persuasion that effects change comes from the Word, by the Spirit.

Paul insists his power of persuasion was elsewhere! He glories in what the world calls foolishness and weakness for it releases the real power; the power of the Spirit proved by its effect in transformed, delivered lives!

II. THE SPIRIT'S POWER COMES WITH THE WORD, SO THAT A PERSON EMBRACES CHRIST; EARNESTLY WELCOMING HIM AS HIS LORD AND SAVIOR. HAVING RECEIVED.

There are four responses to the preached Word in Luke 8:10-15.

A. Paul Presupposes That There Are Levels Or Degrees Of 'Hearing' That Are Not Saving, Sanctifying, Or Delivering.

- 1. There are those who hear nothing: To them it is a right thing just to listen.**
- 2. There is a hearing with only an intellectual understanding: Those who have a surface grasp of what is said but no more.**

There are people who know it is true, they receive it as true and assent to it. Yet, it produces no effect. They are still mere intellectual hearers. They do not hear and believe in such a way as to be saved. They believe as Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:13-24).

- 3. There is a hearing that goes further, which affects the conscience. These are people moved emotionally by the Word, but without any lasting effect in their lives.**

They experience joy, but it is not joy of the Spirit that comes from the root of the new birth. They weep as you would weep at a movie or a play or a funeral. The proof is in the fact that there is no long-term effect! They are not new creatures, they too do not hear so as to be saved (vv. 13-14).

B. There Is Hearing Which Involves The Heart: This Is Those Whose Hearing Comes With A Divine Voice That Speaks To The Whole Person And Saves.

- 1. They hear from the heart, the deepest part of the person, they have received the Word and hear from a renewed heart; for it is a honest and good heart (v. 15).**
- 2. They are pierced to the heart (Acts 2:37).**

The term pierced means to pain the mind sharply, agitate it, to be vehemently smitten (Psalms 108:16, Genesis 34:7). They are spiritually afflicted and needy-people, despondent in heart. "The men were *grieved* and very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing for such a thing ought not to have been done" (Genesis 34:7).

- 3. It is hearing that heeds!**

In Jesus' words; "My sheep hear My voice ... and they follow Me" (John 10:27). "A worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

C. The Spirit Personalizes The Word So That There Is An Embracing Of Christ As The One Exactly Fitted To Your Need. It Is "Receiving" The Word.

The Spirit gives life (John 6:63). "The Word is nothing without the Spirit, it is animated and quickened by it, oh the Spirit is the life and soul of the Word."

Sibbes, quoted in *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith And Experience*, p.24

1. The emphasis of the Word "receive."

It is used of granting access, or offering social intercourse or friendship. It is used of receiving someone into one's family in order to bring them up or to embrace and make as your own. The emphasis [from the hearers' perspective] is on accepting what is offered. It is a welcoming, appropriating reception, a self-prompted taking. In short, Christ is whole-heartedly received and embraced, because He is seen to be exactly fitted, and corresponds perfectly, to our needs. The middle voice emphasizes this whole-hearted reception which could be translated "you on your own part received."

2. The usage of the word received demonstrates it is a full- embracing and heart-felt reception.

- *Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 'whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me.'* (Mark 9:36-37).
- *A man ...whose name was Simeon; and this man was ... devout, looking for the consolation of Israel ... when the parents brought in the child Jesus ... then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, "now Lord You are releasing your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation."* (Luke 2:25, 27-30).
- *The crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had a need of healing.* (Luke 9:11).

- *They went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling towards Jerusalem.*(Luke 9:52b-53).
- *Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you.* (Luke 10:8).
- *I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.* (Luke 16:4).
- *And that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of the restoration of all things.* (Acts 3:20-21a).
- *The apostles ... heard that Samaria had received the word of God.* (Acts 8:14).
- *More noble-minded ... for they received the word with great eagerness.* (Acts 17:11a).
- *I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice.* (Philippians 4:18).

III. THE SPIRIT'S POWER CONQUERS THROUGH THE WORD SO THAT IT OVERCOMES IN THE HEARER ALL OBSTACLES AND CIRCUMSTANCES. IN MUCH TRIBULATION WITH THE JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A. The Pressures And Troubles Associated With Becoming A Christian In An Anti-Christian World Cannot Stop The Spirit Working Through The Word: Christ Is Received In Spite Of Afflictions.

The Greek term for tribulation (θλιψις) indicates a pressing together, an oppression, affliction, distress, or straits (dire). It is used of the affliction of those hard pressed by a siege and the calamities of war

(Matthew 24:21, 29). It is used of the distress of want (2 Corinthians 8:13; Philippians 4:14), "a famine came over Egypt and affliction with it" (Acts 7:21), and of a woman in childbirth (John 16:21). It comes from the root word which means to crush, squeeze, or squash. It is used in Mark 3:9, "...Lest they should crush him." We will have them! (John 16:33; 1 Corinthians 7:28). We have fellowship in the afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24; cp 2 Corinthians 1:3; Acts 14:23). We experience afflictions of the heart (2 Corinthians 2:4; I Thessalonians 3:3). It is used in the LXX; "Many are the afflictions ... and the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalms 34:19). "You who have shown me many troubles and distresses will revive me again" (Psalms 71:20).

B. The Public Perception Of Christ And Christianity, As A Ridiculed Out-Of-Step Belief, Cannot Stop The Spirit's Work Through The Word.

C. The Prospect Of The Promises Of The Gospel Bring A Triumphant Joy By The Holy Spirit.

He says, "with the joy of the Holy Spirit," that we may know that it is not by the instigation of the flesh, or by the promptings of their own nature, that men will be ready and eager to obey God, but that this is the work of God's Spirit. The circumstance, that amidst much tribulation they had embraced the gospel, serves by way of amplification. ... And from this it is so much the more clearly apparent, how necessary it is that the Spirit should aid us in this.

John Calvin, *Commentary on I Thessalonians*, p. 243

IV. THE SPIRIT'S POWER, THROUGH THE WORD, CHANGES PEOPLE THROUGH THE WORD SO THAT THEY BECOME WHAT THEY WERE NOT BEFORE. YOU BECAME IMITATORS OF US AND THE LORD.

PREACHING CHRIST: EXALTING CHRIST IN CROSS-CENTERED, SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PREACHING, WISER THAN MEN, STRONGER THAN MEN, Part 1 – 1 Corinthians 1:17-25

INTRODUCTION

A. There Was A Controversy With The Corinthians Over How To Do Ministry And What Was Effective In Reaching The World (1:17, 21, 25, 2:1-5).

Paul was in the midst of controversy at Corinth. The Corinthians were insisting that there needed to be a fundamental shift in thinking about how to do ministry in order to be effective in reaching the world (1:17). This can be seen by their criticism of Paul. "For I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters, for they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible'" (2 Corinthians 10:9-10). He is responding to mounting pressure to modify how and what he preaches. Paul does not give an inch. Instead, he sets forth the reality that preaching Christ, direct and straight, right into the culture, is God's ordained method for reaching the world (1:21).

B. The Core Issue To Paul Was What Is The Method That God Has Ordained To Impact The World (1:21, 24-25, 2:5). (This Is Not To Neglect The Fact There Are Other Ministries That Together Make An Effective Church).

He declares the fact that God's power is primarily released, for the spread of the gospel in the world, by the plain, straightforward preaching of Christ. Paul is gripped by the fact that it is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (v.24). In other words, Christ Himself, is supreme in the spread of the gospel in the world. He is wiser and stronger than anything man can devise to help people and impact the world (v. 25).

C. He Was Concerned With Genuine God-given Results, Not A Dramatic Display That Only Appears To Impact The World (1:17b, 21, 24-25, 2:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

D. He Was Committed To Being Faithful To Christ, Not Flattering Or Getting A Reputation Among Men. Christ Did Not Send Me To Baptize But To Preach (v.17).

It is possible to dazzle and entertain people by "cleverness of speech" (v. 17) or "superiority of speech or wisdom" (2:1) and momentarily make them feel good, but not actually help them, but in the end there are no genuine God-given effects (2:5). God's ordained method of reaching the world is the straightforward preaching of Christ. In Paul's words, it is "wiser than men and ... stronger than men" (v.25). This is Paul's whole point!

E. His Confidence Was That Christ, Preached Plain And Direct Right Into The Culture, Is The Primary Way God Releases His Power To Advance The Gospel In The World.

Paul was totally confident that in the words of Spurgeon, *Christ is His own attraction*. Paul summarizes his confidence in verse 25 when he says that preaching Christ is "wiser than men and ... stronger than men." He was confident that men cannot come up with anything which will be wiser (more helpful to people), or stronger (more able to penetrate the culture), than the direct, straightforward preaching of Christ. In short, our dependency in ministry is to be on God's methods and God's power (not human wisdom and techniques) to achieve results.

F. What We Have In This Section (1:18 - 2:5), Is The Supremacy Of Christ In The Spread Of The Gospel In A Post-Modern World. Paul's Outline For The Overall Section Is:

1. **The sufficiency and supremacy of Christ in and through the preached Word in effecting results and spreading the gospel in the world (1:18-25).**
2. **The sovereignty of God is the ultimate determining factor in the degree and extent of results (1:26-31).**
3. **The Spirit of God working in power in and through the ministry of the preached Word is what God has ordained will accomplish lasting results (2:1-5).**

There are three marks in 1 Corinthians 1:28-25 of Christ-exalting, Christ-centered preaching that God uses to impact the world:

I. FIRST, THERE IS THE CONVICTION THAT GOD HONORS A MINISTRY CENTERED AROUND THE PREACHING OF CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED (vv. 17-18, 21, 23-24; 2:2). FOR CHRIST DID NOT SEND ME TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, NOT IN CLEVERNESS OF SPEECH, SO THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST WOULD NOT BE MADE VOID. FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS ... (vv. 17-18a).

A. We Are Sent (Commissioned) By Christ To Preach The Good News (The Gospel) Of Christ, We Have No Choice If We Are To Be Faithful (1:17a).

In contrast to a method that is indirect (cleverness of speech) we are to be straightforward and direct. We are to preach Christ and the word of the cross. It will be foolishness to some, but only to those who are perishing, to those who have shown they are not competent to judge anything for they choose what leads to their destruction (v.18).

B. We Safeguard True Impact And Effectiveness In Ministry By Preaching Christ, Not Be Made Void (1:17c).

Paul is interested in results; He does not want the cross to be made void (v. 17). The "word of the cross" is the place of God's power. The word void κενος in verse 17 means to deprive of force. It is used of something that is useless or destitute of something. It is used of labor that is fruitless, and of something without effect (Romans 4:14). It is used of a vessel which contains nothing (Judges 7:16), and of a man sent away empty-handed without money or clothing (Deuteronomy 15:13). It is also used of futile things, that won't succeed (Acts 4:25). In short, Paul does not want the gospel to be without results! He is concerned with impact and effectiveness. He insists this comes by the straightforward preaching of Christ. Notice, that the gospel in verse 17, is Christ in verse 24.

Those who thus veil an unwelcome truth imagine that they make disciples, whereas they are only paying homage to unbelief, and comforting men in their rejection of the divine propitiation for sin ... Certain divines tell us that they must adapt truth to the advance of the age, which means that they must murder it and fling its dead body to the dogs. It is asserted that the advanced philosophy of the nineteenth century requires a progressive theology to keep abreast of it; which simply means that a popular lie shall take the place of an offensive truth. Under pretence (sic) of winning the cultured intellects of the age, "the wisdom of words" has gradually landed us in a denial of those first principles for which the martyrs died. ... yet the attempt is made to decorate the gospel, as though it needed somewhat to commend it to the understanding and the heart. The result is that men's minds are attracted from the gospel either to the preacher or to some utterly indifferent point. Hearers carry home charming morsels of poetry, but they forget the precious blood; they recollect the elaborate metaphors so daintily wrought out, but they forget the five wounds, and fail to look unto the Lord Jesus and be saved. The truth is buried under flowers ... Some seem to imagine that the gospel does not contain within itself sufficient force for its own spreading, and therefore they dream that if it is to have power among men it must either be through the logical way in which it is put – in which case all glory be to logic, or through the handsome manner in which it is stated – in which case all glory be to rhetoric. The notion is current that we should seek the aid of prestige, or talent, or novelty, or excitement; for the gospel itself, the doctrine of the cross, is in itself impotent in its hands and lame upon its feet, and must be sustained by outside power, and carried as by a nurse whithersoever it would go. Reason, elocution art, music, or some other force must introduce and support it, or it will make no advance – so some injuriously dream.

Spurgeon, Volume XXVII , pp. 425-427

C. We Are To Stand Against A Watered Down, Indirect Message, An Approach Which Obscures The Message Of Christ By Mixing It With Man's Wisdom And Techniques. Not In Cleverness Of Speech (1:17c).

The Greeks were not concerned with content. There were over 500 competing philosophies. Everything in the end was a matter of opinion. Nothing could be known for sure. As a result no one spoke with certainty. Therefore, since nothing could be said with certainty, they focused on form, style, and a dramatic display of oratory. The Corinthians, in their immaturity (3:1-3), were fascinated with Greek eloquence and a dramatic style of rhetoric! They mistakenly thought the power lay in dramatic, carefully crafted oratory. It is similar to today, where many place their confidence in PowerPoint, visuals, and drama. Like many today, they had lost confidence in the power of a Christ-centered, Word-centered ministry. In short, they lost confidence in Christ Himself: A confidence that Christ preached directly and plainly into their culture was how and where God released His power!

II. SECOND, THERE IS A CONFIDENCE THAT GOD HAS PROMISED TO EXERCISE HIS POWER THROUGH CHRIST-CENTERED CROSS-CENTERED PREACHING. FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD. FOR IT IS WRITTEN, 'I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.' WHERE IS THE WISE MAN? WHERE IS THE SCRIBE? WHERE IS THE DEBATER OF THIS AGE? HAS NOT GOD MADE FOOLISH THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD? FOR SINCE IN THE WISDOM OF GOD THE WORLD THROUGH ITS WISDOM DID NOT COME TO KNOW GOD, GOD WAS WELL-PLEASSED THROUGH THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE MESSAGE PREACHED TO SAVE THOSE WHO BELIEVE (vv. 18-21).

A. The "Word Of The Cross" Refers To The Comprehensive Work Of Redemption, Accomplished By Christ's Death, Resurrection And Exaltation To God's Right Hand. For The Word Of The Cross ... It Is The Power Of God (v. 18).

To preach the "word of the cross" is not merely to recount the event! It is to preach who Christ is, and all that He has done, and all that He will do, all accomplished by His incarnation, crucifixion, and exaltation to the right hand of God.

1. It is to preach the supreme glory of the person who was crucified. Paul says literally in 2:2, And this one crucified.

Preaching the word of the cross involves preaching Christ's glorious person: His identity and majestic glory as the Eternal Son. It is to preach that Christ possesses, in His Being, all the infinite and immutable perfections of God (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). It is to preach His supreme glory because of His "equality with God" (Philippians 2:6). In other words, it is to preach His infinite majesty and splendor, and that this is the one who became a man and was crucified for sinners. As such a one, He is limitless in His power and all-sufficient in His provisions. In short, He is all sinners need (John 1:14-16). He is perfectly suitable to their plight. It is to preach moreover, that all the infinite, immutable attributes of His Being were displayed on the cross: All for the benefit of embondaged sinners. His infinite grace, mercy, love, justice, holiness and truthfulness were exercised and displayed to redeem and deliver sinners. This is what it means to preach "and this one crucified".

2. It is to preach the work of Christ accomplished on the cross.

It is to preach all that was immediately accomplished on the cross:

- a. His substitution for sinners – *the just for the unjust* (1 Peter 3:18), *a ransom for many* (Matthew 20:28).

- b. His propitiation and redemption (Romans 3:24-26).
- c. His purchase of a complete ransom (Matthew 20:28; Colossians 1:21-22).
- d. He accomplished and finished a completed reconciliation (Colossians 1:21-22).

It is also to preach all that was subsequently accomplished as a result of the cross:

- e. His resurrection, ascension, enthronement, and intercession at the right hand of God (Acts 2:32-34; Romans 1:1-4, 4:25, 10:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15; Hebrews 7:25).
- f. His sending of the Spirit and all that that accomplished (John 14:16, 17; 16:7; Acts 2:30-34).
 - (1) The regeneration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit that breaks the bondage and power of sin. (John 3:3-6; Titus 3:5)
 - (2) The filling and empowering of the Spirit that overcomes weakness and failure, whereby He empowers His people (John 7:37; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13).

B. The Word Of The Cross Is The Catalyst That Releases God's Power In Delivering, Transforming, And Liberating Sinners. To Us Who Are Being Saved It Is The Power Of God ... God Was Well-Pleased Through The Foolishness Of The Message Preached To Save Those Who Believe. (vv. 18, 21).

- 1. The power of the Spirit attends the preaching of Christ (2:4-5), because the Spirit was sent to glorify Christ (John 16:14). The result is that people have genuine, saving faith (v. 5).**

2. The exercise of God's power is manifested through the Word of the cross (vv. 18, 21, 24). Paul says that it is, Christ the power of God (1:24).

- a. **There is power.** There is, in preaching Christ, a power that is effectual, it is a power able to accomplish an intended aim (1:21; 2:4-5). Power translates the word, *δυναμιαο*, which refers to effectual power, the power that accomplishes an intended goal. It is used in the following verses where it is translated both, "able" and "power": *He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted* (Hebrews 2:18). *That we will be able to comfort* (2 Corinthians 1:4). *The word ... is able to save your souls* (James 1:21). *Who are protected by the power of God* (1 Peter 1:5).

- b. **It saves.** There is, in preaching Christ, a power that saves (1:21) and delivers sinners. Salvation is a broad term. It is carefully chosen by Paul. He did not say, "to justify," though it includes that. Salvation is broader than justification, it refers not only to acceptance with God, but also to rescue and deliverance. It refers, first, to the initial deliverance at conversion from the guilt and penalty of sin. But it also refers to the ongoing deliverances of the Christian life; from the enslaving power of sin and temptation.
 - (1) there is the initial deliverance at conversion (v. 21).
 - (2) there is ongoing deliverance and transformation throughout the believer's life. In verse 18, "being saved" is a present tense. Literally it reads, "who are being saved." In other words, Christ not only initially saves, He continues to work further in deliverance or transformation as well (Colossians 1:28). We all beholding Christ in the mirror of the Word and are being transformed (2 Corinthians 3:18).

- c. There is, in preaching Christ, a power that calls men to the actual experience of true conversion (v. 24).

- d. There is, in preaching Christ, a power that is superior in wisdom and strength to anything man can devise (v. 25). It is wiser and stronger than anything man can come up with to help people or spread the gospel. Paul's choice of the term "wisdom" is significant. The Greek philosophers all claimed they had wisdom: The solution to the problems of life. They claimed that their philosophy could help with life's dilemmas. Paul, on the contrary, says Christ is true wisdom. He is the ultimate answer and solution, for He is God's wisdom and God's power.

C. The Reality Of The Bankruptcy Of The World's Wisdom And Techniques To Deliver And Change, Has Been Exposed. For It Is Written, 'I Will Destroy The Wisdom Of The Wise, And The Cleverness Of The Clever I Will Set Aside.' Where Is The Wise Man? Where Is The Scribe? Where Is The Debater Of This Age? Had Not God Made Foolish The Wisdom Of The World? (vv. 19-20).

1. **God Himself has demonstrated the fact that men are powerless to help and deliver people. Their supposed wisdom is actually no wisdom at all. Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14, it says,**

Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed.

- a. Israel's supposed wise leaders were unable to deliver and help Israel from her enemies. They refused to believe that God Himself alone, could and would, deliver them from their oppressive enemies! So they offered their own solutions and their own "wisdom" which utterly failed (Isaiah 8:6-10, 30:1-5). Isaiah 29 says,

Be delayed and wait, blind yourselves and be blind (v.9). The entire vision will be to you like ... a sealed book (v. 11). On

that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see (v. 18). And the wisdom of their wise men will perish (v. 14).

2. God challenges the 'wise' to come forward and to admit that their wisdom utterly fails. He has exposed their folly—they claim one thing, but they cannot do it. Where is the wise man? (1:19, 20).

ILL: Ironside said to a skeptic, "bring 10 men who your philosophy has changed and I will bring 50 who Christ has delivered and changed!"

How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. "The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught; Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have? Therefore I will give their wives to others, their fields to new owners; Because from the least even to the greatest everyone is greedy for gain; from the prophet even to the priest everyone practices deceit. They heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace,' but there is no peace. Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, and they did not know how to blush; therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time of their punishment they shall be brought down," says the Lord. "I will surely snatch them away," declares the Lord; There will be no grapes on the vine and no figs on the fig tree, and the leaf will wither; and what I have given them will pass away." "

Jeremiah 8:8-13

III. THIRD, THERE IS A COMMITMENT TO PREACH CHRIST IN SPITE OF PRESSURES TO CHANGE TO A MORE CULTURALLY ACCEPTED METHOD (vv. 21-25).

A. It Is The Proper Response To The Reality That Man's Wisdom Is Powerless To Help People (vv. 19-20).

- B. It Promises Life And Deliverance To All Who Believe And Renounce Man's Wisdom (v. 21), (see 3:18).**
- C. It Pleased God To Appoint A Method That Men Think Foolish In Order To Expose Their Folly By The Gospel's Fruitfulness (vv. 22-24).**
- D. It Points To Christ Alone Who Is True Power And True Wisdom (v. 24).**
- E. It Is A Power And Wisdom, Superior To Anything Man Can Think Of In Order To Help And Liberate Men (v. 25).**
- F. It Produces Effects When Joined To The Exercise Of The Spirit's Power (2:4-5).**

Preaching Christ is wiser and stronger than anything which men can think of in order to genuinely change or liberate men! This was Paul's conviction that compelled him to refuse to modify either his message or ministry, but to continue to preach Christ directly into the culture.

PREACHING CHRIST: EXALTING CHRIST IN CROSS-CENTERED, SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PREACHING, WISER THAN MEN, STRONGER THAN MEN, Part 2 – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

INTRODUCTION

In this section, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Paul continues his case that preaching Christ is "wiser than men, stronger than men": It is more helpful and more able to penetrate the culture than anything men can come up with (1:25). This is so because Christ Himself is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1:24). Paul asserts, in these verses, that the sovereignty of God is the ultimate factor that determines the degree of the impact of ministry. It is not our own wisdom, our techniques, our eloquence, our humanly devised strategies, or anything else that man in his own wisdom can come up with that brings God-given results. The passage can be outlined as follows:

- A. He Calls, Converts And Changes Men Without Regard For, Or Use Of, Man's Wisdom (v. 26).**

- B. He Chooses Himself Who Is To Be Saved In Order To Abase Man's Wisdom And Expose Its Uselessness (vv. 27-28).**

- C. He Claims For Himself All The Glory Without Any Part Of The Glory Going To Man's Wisdom (vv. 29-31).**

As said, Paul demonstrates further in this passage, that preaching Christ is "wiser than men, stronger than men." He does so by asserting that God Himself sovereignly chooses, calls and converts. Moreover, He does so without any mixture or dependency on human wisdom or technique; but by a ministry in which Christ is preached plain and straight – right into the culture.

I. HE CALLS, CONVERTS, AND CHANGES PEOPLE THROUGH PREACHING CHRIST WITHOUT REGARD FOR, OR USE OF, MAN'S WISDOM. FOR CONSIDER YOUR CALLING BRETHREN (v. 26a).

A. The Consideration Of Your Past And The Method God Used To Change You Proves The Power Of Preaching: It Was By A Direct And Straight-forward Message Preached, Not By A Carefully Crafted, Polished Display Of Oratory That Obscured Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). For Consider Your Calling Brethren (v. 26a).

Think about it Paul says! How did it happen to you, was it by a straightforward message about Christ, or was it indirect and veiled? We can think as well about Paul's own conversion (Acts 9).

B. The Call Of A Person To Salvation Is God's Work; He Himself Brings A Person To Christ Through The Gospel, Not Our Man-Made Methods And Strategies.

- 1. Calling is not a mere external invitation which can be rejected: It is more than an outward summons.**
- 2. Calling is an internal, effective summons – by God Himself – that results in a person's conversion.**

We are "called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, 30). "We are called out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Peter 2:9). He draws us (John 6:44) which is used of the drawing of water. It means more than wooing. It is used in Acts when "They seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the market place" (Acts 16:19).

You don't drag out water! But you don't say water, water, please come out either. In other words, in calling, the Spirit penetrates the soul. Kittel says it means to be "Compelled by irresistible superiority."

C. The Class And Status Of The People God Calls And Converts, For The Most Part, Is What The World Scorns, Which Indicates God's Rejection Of Man's Wisdom. Not Many Wise According To The Flesh, Not Many Mighty, Not Many Noble.

The people called are people who by "human standards," for the most part, are not:

- 1. Wise.**
- 2. Mighty (δυνατος): This refers to influential people of power and position.**
- 3. Noble (ευγενας): These are people distinguished by ancestry, which in that age were usually wealthy.**

Here is Paul's point: God exercises His power to accomplish in people what the world, by its wisdom, seeks but can't do. He saves, liberates, and renews. He pardons, changes, and gives peace and purpose. The wise of this age, with all their supposed wisdom, can't do this. Only Christ, the power of God can!

D. The Purpose Of God In Calling And Changing People Through The Simplicity Of The Message Preached, Was To Expose And Demonstrate By Contrast The Powerlessness Of The World's Wisdom To Effectively Change And Help People. But God Has Chosen The Foolish Things Of The World To Shame The Wise ... The Weak Things ... And The Base Things ... And The Despised God Has Chosen, The Things That Are Not, So That He May Nullify The Things That Are (vv. 27-28).

1. He abases man's supposed solutions as folly and profitless.

- a. **He shames.** The Greek word for shame, *καταισκυνε*, means to dishonor or disgrace. It is used of one who suffers a repulse or of one whose hope has deceived and disappointed. It is used of someone who is humiliated: *As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated* (Luke 13:17a). It is used of disappointment: *Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed* (Romans 10:11). It is used when someone is embarrassed: *Do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?* (1 Corinthians 11:22)

O my God, in You I trust, do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed (Psalm 25:2-3).

- b. **He nullifies** their supposed claim to be able to help people and solve their problems.

The Greek word nullify, *καταργεο*, means to put out of action, to put an end to, or do away with. It means to abolish, to deprive of force and influence, to cause to have no further efficacy. It is used where Paul writes, *faith is made void and the promise nullified* (Romans 4:14). It is the word used where Paul says that, *Christ who abolished death* (2 Timothy 1:10). It is also used in the statement, *their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God* (Romans 3:3).

ILL: A person who is the 'black sheep' in a family of successful people in a moment is delivered and free. The rest of the family continues to go to therapists and often are divorced and unhappy, never finding peace or fulfillment. Christ shames and nullifies their supposed wisdom in a moment.

ILL: A rock and a piece of paper on Junior High science project day.

2. He reveals the complete folly of man's estimate of power by saving and helping by "foolishness" those the world scorns.

- a. Those who they consider foolish are the wise.
- b. Those who they consider weak are the strong.
- c. Those who they consider base and undistinguished are, in fact, exalted royalty.
- d. Those who they consider as "despised": literally, "the nothings," the nobodies are the ones who possess everything.

The Greek word despise, *εκουτηνεο*, means to consider as nothing, to make of no account, to despise utterly (Luke 18:9). It means to treat with contempt and mockery (Galatians 4:14). It is used of the Pharisees, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt* (Luke 18:9). It is used of Herod's attitude towards Christ when it says, *Herod treating Him with contempt and mocking Him* (Luke 23:11). It is used of the rejection of Christ by Jewish leaders when it says, *the stone which was rejected by you, the builders* (Acts 4:11).

Paul uses a perfect tense. In other words, the world considers them to be in a permanent condition and state of being nobodies. In short, in the world's estimate, they are nothing and always will be. In reality, however, they possess everything (3:22-23).

- e. Finally, those who they consider as "the things that are not."

The Greek phrase "the things that are not," is τα με οντα, it is the most contemptible expression possible. It is used of something that doesn't even exist (Romans 4:17). In that time, 'being' was everything and being 'nothing' was the worst insult. You were considered a nonentity, something so insignificant, you were as it were, invisible.

II. HE CHOOSES THOSE WHO ARE TO BE SAVED WITHOUT ANY REGARD TO MAN'S WISDOM IN ORDER TO ABASE AND EXPOSE MAN'S WISDOM AS USELESS. BUT GOD HAS CHOSEN ... GOD HAS CHOSEN ... GOD HAS CHOSEN (vv. 27-28).

A. His Choice Is A Clear Demonstration That The Power Is Not Of Man, Nor His Techniques And Methods, But It Is Entirely Of God.

- 1. His choice exalts those who are weak and despised over those who pride themselves in their wisdom and strength.**
- 2. His choice exposes the uselessness of human wisdom. He exercises His sovereign power in preaching, and passes by man's wisdom as a means of deliverance and salvation.**

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:27-28).

He makes human wisdom appear to be what it really is: Nothing! He nullifies it, by doing – through what they consider foolishness (and for people they scorn) – what they, by their supposed wisdom, cannot do themselves.

B. His Choice Is The Ultimate Cause And Final Explanation Of Why Some Are Saved And Some Perish (1:18).

1. Those who perish, perish because of their own sin and rebellion.

The reason why any sink into hell is their sin, and only their sin; they will not repent, they will not believe in Christ, they will not turn to God and therefore they perish willfully by their own act and deed.

Spurgeon, *God's Strange Choice*, Vol X, p. 486

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted [was willing] to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (Matthew 23:37-38).

2. Those who are saved are saved because God chose them to be saved!

a. Man's will is enslaved and dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-3).

- he loves darkness and does not come (John3:19).
- he cannot come (Romans 8:7).
- he does not seek (Romans 3:11).

NOTE: The reason there are so many poor and powerless Christians is not because they need God, and the rich and powerful do not. A poor man loves to sin as much as a rich man! There are so many poor and powerless believers because God chose to save them in order to shame those who consider themselves wise!

b. God's will is the determining factor in salvation, not man's abilities or wisdom.

- we are born of God, not of will of the flesh, nor the will of men, but of God (John 1:13).
- three times it says God has chosen (v. 27-28).
- it is a middle voice - "He picked out for Himself who would be saved."
- it is an unconditional choice - God saw no faith or good in any man.
- God has mercy on whom He will have mercy (Romans 9:16).

c. It is the regular emphasis of Scripture that God's choice is the determining factor and reason any receive God's blessing.

- Abram was chosen and then led out of idolatry (Joshua 24:2-3).
- Israel was chosen out of the nations (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times, your fathers live beyond the River...and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan' (Joshua 24:2-3).

C. His Choice Is A Condescending Act Of Grace And Mercy.

- 1. Man chooses those who would be most helpful. God chooses those He can most help.**
- 2. Man chooses those who give the best return. God chooses those who He can aid.**
- 3. Man chooses those most deserving. God chooses the worst because they are the least deserving. It is not of merit, but of grace.**

D. His Choice Is Contrary To Expectations.

"Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble. The foolish things ... the base things ..." If someone does not pick a prince or ruler, you do not expect him to pick you. In fact, you would excuse him from picking you. God passes by the king for the beggar. He leaves the noble that he may choose the base.

III. HE CLAIMS FOR HIMSELF ALL THE GLORY WHEN A PERSON IS SAVED WITHOUT ANY REGARD FOR MAN'S WISDOM OR METHODS. SO THAT NO MAN MAY BOAST BEFORE GOD. BUT BY HIS DOING YOU ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO BECAME TO US WISDOM FROM GOD, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION, SO THAT, JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, 'LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.' (vv. 29-31).

A. He Redirects Our Boasting To Himself, And Reserves The Right Of Boasting Exclusively To Himself. So That No Man May Boast Before God (v. 29).

1. The actual experience of conversion is God's doing. He called us (1:26).

Boasting, in the context, is boasting in wisdom or eloquence or techniques; as if that is why a person is successful in ministry (see 3:5-6).

2. The fact any are saved is that He chose and called them.

B. Our Relationship To Christ Was Accomplished By God's Doing Alone. By His Doing You Are In Christ Jesus (v. 30).

1. He joined us to Christ. Our union, by which we receive all our blessings, is because of Him.

- He chose us (vv. 27-28).
- He called us, which includes the fact that He drew us and gave us the gift of faith (vv. 24, 26).

2. He sent Christ: Christ accomplished by His incarnation and His atoning death all that was necessary to bring us to Himself.

C. The Riches Of Grace In Christ Come From God, Who Became To Us Wisdom From God (v. 30).

1. The primary all-encompassing blessing is wisdom.

Wisdom is Paul's term of choice in his controversy with the Corinthians. It is his term for the gospel and all its blessings. It is his summary term for Christ (v. 24). In short, it is Christ and the gospel viewed as that which helps man, and solves the dilemma of life in a cursed world. It is Christ viewed as man's solution - the Savior who pardons, frees, and liberates.

- a. In Christ we have the source of life and all spiritual blessings.
- b. In Christ we are justified, delivered, and liberated.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:32-36).

2. The particular aspects of our spiritual blessings.

- a. We have righteousness: We are right with God forever. It refers to the gift of righteousness by which we are justified and accepted (Romans 3:25-26).
- b. We have sanctification: We are now living a life freed from bondage. The new birth is the root of sanctification. We have a renewed, liberated nature. In addition we have the indwelling Spirit, by which we have the power and enablement to live a transformed life.
- c. We have redemption: We have been delivered from the guilt of sin. We also experience ongoing deliverance from the power of sin. Eventually we will be delivered from the presence of sin!

Paul's argument is this: Why would anyone need to, or want to, supplement or modify this "wisdom?" Only a person who has not experienced "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (v. 24) or a person who has lost sight of the fact that Christ is "wiser than men and ... stronger than men" (v. 25), would add the world's wisdom to "Christ the wisdom of God." Moreover, how can anyone who has experienced Christ's power not preach Him directly and plainly, straight into the culture?

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: WISER THAN MEN STRONGER THAN MEN – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

INTRODUCTION

Paul is in the middle of an explanation of the source of spiritual power. Where does power come from? How are genuine results achieved? He continues to make his case that the spread of the gospel is not found in man's wisdom, techniques or self-conceived ideas, but in the faithful, straightforward preaching of Christ.

- A. He Was Convinced That Genuine Results Do Not Come From Personal Wisdom Or Skill, So He Preached Not As An Orator, But As A Message Bearer.**

- B. The Central Point Paul Makes In This Section Is That The Power Which Brings Results Does Not Lie In A Person Or A Presentation, But In The Work Of The Holy Spirit Through The Exalting Of Christ In The Preached Word.**

Paul is concerned with power, he mentions power four times, at the beginning the middle and end of the passage (1:18, 24, 2:4-5). Preaching Christ is God's primary means of power. It is His primary method to advance the gospel, although there are other facets essential to ministry, such as the gifts of the Spirit and the ministry of all members of Christ's body

- C. He Is Confronting The Corinthians Over Their Culturally-Driven, Compromised View Of Ministry.**

- 1. They were mesmerized by the wisdom of Greek culture. To the Greeks wisdom was not theory but practical knowledge that helped people deal with the issues they faced in life.**
- 2. They modified the message and the method.**

We must impress people (1 Corinthians 1:17 - 2:3-5).

- 3. They were critical of both his message and his direct style of preaching (2:1-2, 1:18-24; 2 Corinthians 10:10).**

I. THERE MUST BE A CONVICTION THAT THE SPIRIT GRANTS SUCCESS TO THOSE WHO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD'S ORDAINED METHOD OF PREACHING CHRIST. AND WHEN I CAME TO YOU, BRETHREN, I DID NOT COME WITH SUPERIORITY OF SPEECH OR OF WISDOM, PROCLAIMING TO YOU THE TESTIMONY OF GOD (1 Corinthians 2:1).

A. Preaching Christ Is A Response To God's Explicit, Specific Revelation (1 Corinthians 1:18-31) Of How He Will Sovereignly Work In Power To Spread The Gospel.

The connective "and I" has the idea here in Hodge's words, *In accordance with the clearly revealed purpose of God to reject the wisdom of the world and to make the cross the means of salvation* (p. 29). This is why He came to Corinth as he did.

B. Preaching Christ Refuses To Adopt An Indirect Method That Focuses On Eloquence, Or A Display Of Learning.

1. **He was determined to avoid any method that veiled or obscured Christ so that men in the end did not see Christ who is the power of God (1:24).**
2. **He did not advocate laziness or incompetence in preaching. He "reasoned," "explained," and "proved" (Acts 17:2-3).**

C. Preaching Christ Recognizes The Fact That We Are Commissioned With The Message And Mandate Of Another: We Are Message Bearers.

1. **The meaning of the term, "proclaiming" emphasizes announcing a message that originates from someone else.**

The root word is the word for 'angel' or messenger. The term, (καταγγελλο) therefore, refers to the action of those who simply and directly convey the message of another (1 John 1:5, 3:11). It comes from the root word which *refers to the activity of the messenger who conveys a message which has been given him* (Brown, Vol. III, p. 45). The word is a compound which means to bring news, notify, or proclaim publically. The preposition (*kata*) in the compound emphasizes that the message came "down from" another and stresses its authority and seriousness (Acts 4:2, 13:5, 37-38, 17:23).

But He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you (Acts 13:37-38).

2. **The message, since it is God's, cannot and must not be compromised: It is the mystery or truth of God. It is His message about His Son.**
 - a. The message comes from God's action. He revealed it and He determined its content (v. 6).
 - b. We do not shape the message by what the hearers want (2 Timothy 4:1-3).

- c. We do not preach politics, economics, even religion. The message, when joined by the Spirit's power, ensures true converts. It is the vehicle of God's power.

II. WE MUST CENTER ON THAT WHICH THE SPIRIT HONORS: THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST. FOR I AM DETERMINED TO KNOW NOTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED (v. 2).

A. He Stood Against Any Pressure To Decentralize Christ. For I Am Determined (v. 2a).

He made a decision, after much thought and consideration (κρίνω), not to modify his message or his ministry, but to continue to preach Christ straight into the culture. In other words, faithfulness to Christ was his central concern (1:17, 4:1). Fruitfulness in genuine conversions was his goal (2:5) and his compelling conviction was that the place of true power is preaching Christ, since the Spirit was sent to glorify Christ (John 16:13-15).

B. His Singular Focus Was Upon The Person And Work Of Christ. For I Am Determined To Know Nothing Among You Except Jesus Christ, And Him Crucified (v. 2).

1. The saving work of Christ: It is "Jesus Christ ... crucified."

- The cross is the source and starting point of all the benefits and blessings of salvation.
- "Christ" refers to His office as the Savior, the deliverer who breaks the bondage of sin.
- "Christ" also refers to His office as the sin bearer, who sacrificed Himself, to make a propitiation to put away sin.
- It is the demonstration of infinite love for sinners.
- It is the starting point of any theology of God.

ILL: We need a person to help us, not principles. As a young boy I feared being dragged out by the undertow - I needed a person, my father, not principles of swimming.

2. The supremacy of Christ's person: It is "This One" crucified.

- a. He is the incarnate God who loved sinners and became a man.
- b. He is the infinite God in the flesh who possesses all the attributes of the divine nature, and is therefore, limitless in His power, and all sufficient in His provision.

III. WE MUST BE CONFIDENT, IN THE SPIRIT'S POWER, TO BRING RESULTS THAT SPREAD THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD.

A. The Reality That Apart From The Spirit Nothing Would Be Accomplished Weighed Heavy Upon Him. I Was With You In Weakness And In Fear And In Much Trembling (v. 3).

He was oppressed with a sense of his weakness and insufficiency. It is an anxiety of mind arising out of a sense of insufficiency and of the infinite importance of the work.

Hodge, p. 31

B. He Rested Entirely On The Spirit To Spread The Gospel Through God's Ordained Means And Methods. And My Message And My Preaching Were Not In Persuasive Words Of Wisdom, But In Demonstration Of The Spirit And Of Power, So That Your Faith Would Not Rest On The Wisdom Of Men, But On The Power Of God (vv. 4-5).

1. He realized the deficiency of relying on man's methods (v. 4a).

Catchy phrases or dramatic gestures do not work – Christ must work.

2. He depends wholly upon the Spirit to demonstrate and exhibit effectual power.

- a. The term "demonstration" means more than a mere manifestation or display of power. A display of fireworks, for example, does not change anyone.

The term, δεικνύω means to show, exhibit; to expose to the eyes. Metaphorically it means to give the evidence or proof of a thing.

The following are examples:

What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things? (John 2:18).

Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (James 2:18).

This was to demonstrate His righteousness ... for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier. (Romans 3:25-26).

Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love. (2 Corinthians 8:24).

- b. It refers to a concrete example, a specimen of power that is an actual (concrete) proof; an 'exhibit' as it were, of power.

C. He Realized That The Spirit Through The Word Alone Must Produce Genuine Saving Faith Or There Will Be False Conversions (v. 5).

THE POWER OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED

Preaching must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Without this demonstration of Spirit and power in our preaching, nothing of abiding value will be achieved no matter how many people may admire our cogency or enjoy our illustrations, or learn from our doctrine." These words, fitly spoken by John Piper, express what all those who preach must feel. Without the power of the Spirit attending our preaching, hearts are not reached either in conversion or sanctification, and Christ is not glorified. *So that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:12).*

I. THE WEAKNESS THAT THE SPIRIT ASSISTS WITH POWER (1 Corinthians 2:1-3).

A. The Dynamic Of The Cross Is Central To Preaching And The Basis Of A Sense Of Weakness That Christ Honors.

1. The cross should put an end to any element of pride in preaching.

- a. Preaching is not to be done with a self-conscious focus upon eloquence. This means there is not to be a reliance upon, or a display of, learning. Neither is it to be done with an air of self-righteousness. It would be a self-contradiction to the cross we claim to preach (1 Corinthians 1:17). Seeking to be eloquent displays pride in human learning and wisdom and is a form of boasting in abilities; the very thing the cross judged.
- b. Preaching should never be done to seek man's praise (Galatians 1:10; 6:14).

They ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God, without mincing the matter at all; in handling the sword of the Spirit, as the minister of the Lord of hosts, they ought not to be mild and gentle; they are not to be gentle and

moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder. The word of God, which is in itself sharper than a two-edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by its ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

Jonathan Edwards, *In Iain Murray's A New Biography*,
p. 210

2. The cross requires humility in preaching.

- a. Plainness of speech is to be a priority.

I fear me that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. I mean this, that they judge a minister by his elaboration of style, or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture; and if he be a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him, he is a favourite with what is considered to be 'a respectable church'. Some despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly, who uses great plainness of speech and discards the words which man's wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the tag-rag of the people; and for this they turn their backs upon him. They want not the fire of the Spirit, but the flash of oratory; not the rushing wind of the Holy Ghost, but the perfumed zephyrs of 'high culture'. The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy upon the church that has got into such a miserable state, and is so wanting to be true education, for where a church is educated by the Lord she understands that salvation is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Plainness of speech is the perfection of gospel utterance, for the Master Himself so spake. Men of studied elocution, who can pile up a climax, and cap it with a dainty piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honours to be soul-winners. Have you not heard fine orations, which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty upon the face of the earth, for there was little of Christ in them, and none of

the unction of the Holy One? Great sermons are often great sins, and 'intellectual treats' are frequently a mess of savoury pottage made of unclean meats.

Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. XX,
pp. 211-212

b. The message of the cross self-evidently abases man (including the preacher).

(1) A crucified Christ by necessity exalts God and abases man and his wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:17-31).

Why would the cross have been emptied if Paul had come with oratorical flourishes and displays of philosophical wisdom? It would have been emptied because he would have been cultivating the very boasting in man that the cross was meant to crucify. This is what I mean when I say that the cross is the ground of the humility in preaching.

Piper, p. 34

(2) The cross should set a tone and give an aroma of humility to preaching (1 Corinthians 2:1-4). It isn't to be done with superiority of speech.

The cross should cause us to renounce our own confidence in our abilities or knowledge as contributing anything that would make us superior. Why? We are those who "know nothing but Christ Jesus and Him crucified." 'Superior' comes from a word which means "to have over one, to stand out, rise above, or be above or superior." Paul uses it when he speaks of the "Surpassing value of knowing Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Superiority is slain by the cross.

The cross should create a sense of our personal weakness. It shouts our unworthiness. It should shift dependance from our own ability to persuade men to God's ability alone. There is a

conscious self-belittlement. There is a captivation upon Christ's person and work. We preach Christ crucified which literally is "Christ Jesus and this One crucified."

- (3) The power of preaching comes from God alone (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 2 Corinthians 4:7). In other words, the style of preaching recedes into the background. It is secondary. The substance of the message preached is primary. The supernaturalness of preaching is in the penetrating power of the Spirit who is able to reach the heart and captivate it with Christ.

Christ-centered Biblical preaching holds up the glory of God, and abases and keeps the preacher out of sight.

B. A Desperateness In Preaching Is Rooted In A Sense Of Complete Inadequacy To Accomplish The Task.

Never allow yourself to feel equal to the work. If you ever find that spirit growing on you be afraid.

Phillip Brooks

1. The task is beyond human ability to accomplish.

- a. To save (2 Corinthians 2:16-3:6).
- b. To revive and sanctify (Acts 20:32; Philippians 2:13).

2. The terms Paul uses to describe weakness picture our complete inadequacy for the task (1 Corinthians 2:3).

- a. Weakness ($\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\nu\iota\alpha$) is used of those who are physically infirm or incapacitated. It speaks of the sense of utter inability for the task. It refers to a lack of strength or wisdom to do something required (Romans 8:26). It

refers to powerlessness and inability. "*For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh*" (Romans 8:3).

- b. Fear (πηοβος) refers to a dread of being left without divine assistance because of the weightiness of the message preached. He also feared they would rest in him and his wisdom and not God's (verse 5).
- c. Trembling (τρομοσ) indicates the gravity of the message preached. It refers to something that causes a quaking, as it were. Here it is a quaking in the light of the seriousness of the issues and the need for a proper response. It is a sanctified anxiety (Philippians 2:12; Ephesians 6:5), that comes from realizing the seriousness of something.

II. THE WORD IS THAT ALONE WHICH THE SPIRIT ATTENDS WITH POWER (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

A. The Author Of The Word Is The Spirit Of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Spirit Is The Spirit Of Truth (John 14:17).

- 1. **The Spirit must be and will be with the preached Word (Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).**
- 2. **Prayer must accompany preaching if it is to produce divine effects (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3-4; Acts 4:29-31).**

B. Allegiance To The Text Is What The Spirit Honors.

1. The content must come from a clear exposition and pointed application of the text (There must be something on the altar for the fire of God to fall upon and consume).

2. The regular quoting and use of key supporting texts is vital.

a. It is the apostolic model (Acts 2:17-36).

b. It makes God's Word, and not our own thoughts, the issue. It gives the message divine authority, since we have none. An eyewitness said of George Whitefield:

When I saw Mr. Whitefield come upon the scaffold he looked almost angelic, a young, slim, slender youth, before some thousands of people and with a bold, undaunted countenance...it solemnized my mind and put me in a trembling fear before he began to preach for he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God. Hearing him preach gave me a heart wound, [so that], by God's blessing, my old foundation was broken up and I saw that my righteousness would not save me, then I was convinced of the doctrine of election and went right to quarreling with God about it because all that I could do would not save me.

In Iain Murray's Edwards, p. 214

3. The truth is what God brings with force upon the mind and the heart.

a. We must focus our preaching where the Spirit promises to focus. In John 16:14, Jesus says of the Spirit; "He shall glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you." God sanctifies and changes His people by the truth (John 17:17), the truth, centered on Christ (Acts 20:33).

b. We must ourselves feed on God's truth if we are to preach God's truth (1 Timothy 4:13-16).

III. THE WORK THAT THE SPIRIT ACCOMPLISHES IN POWER (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

A. There Is The Experience Of The Spirit In The Event Of Preaching.

B. The Effect In The Hearers Is An Awareness Of God's Presence (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

1. There is an individualizing power that reaches the heart (Acts 2:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12).

2. There is a soul-piercing, heart-awakening work.

One of the prominent features of the gospel in The Great Awakening was that the gospel was armed by the Holy Ghost with a tremendous and irresistible individualizing power. Man was made to come forth into the light and take his appropriate place before God as guilty and accountable.

In Iain Murray's, Jonathan Edwards, p. 170

3. There is a reviving, restoring power by the Spirit through the Word (Psalm 119:25, 50, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156; Luke 24:32).

THE PASSION OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE WHOLE-HEARTED

Biblical preaching, by virtue of the character of its message, assumes and demands earnestness. To preach without earnestness is contradictory to the message preached. In other words, it is not only what is preached that is important, but the manner in which the message is preached as well. Luke said about apostolic preaching, "They entered the synagogue of the Jews together and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed both of Jews and of Greeks" (Acts 14:1).

I. THE DEMAND FOR EARNESTNESS: THE IMPORTANCE OF IT.

A. The End And Goal Of Preaching Assumes And Requires Earnestness.

- 1. Preaching involves more than feeding the mind, it involves 'teaching the heart and saving a soul' (Acts 2:37).**

Jonathan Edwards on the need for earnestness said:

If a minister has light without heat, and entertains his hearers with learned discourses, without a savor of the power of godliness, or any appearance of fervency of spirit, and zeal for God and the good of souls, he may gratify itching ears, and fill the heads of his people with empty notions; but it will not be very likely to reach their hearts, or save their souls.

The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume II,
The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister, p. 998

- 2. Preaching assumes a conviction of the necessity to reach hearts concerning eternal realities of the glory of heaven and horrors of hell. It also concerns vital, life-altering issues and decisions by God's people.**

Instead of that interchange of smiles which lately had pervaded the congregation while the orator was doing his part, now every man feels himself alone in that crowd. Even the preacher himself is almost forgotten; for an immortal guilty spirit has come into the presence of eternal justice.

In Iain Murray's, Edwards, p. 170

He was none of those downy doctors who soothe their hearers into delusive hopes of the divine acceptance, or substitute external morality for vital godliness. He scorned to proclaim the peace of God till the rebel had laid down his arms and returned to his allegiance. He searched the conscience with the terrors of the law, before he assuaged its anguish with the sweet emollients of a bleeding Deity.

Webster in, Iain Murray's Edwards, p. 45

B. The Experience Of The Spirit's Power Requires Earnestness.

All useful, Spirit-honored preaching involves whole-hearted earnestness. Eye-witnesses to men who were empowered in preaching testify that a fundamental characteristic of their preaching was earnestness. The Spirit, as a whole, does not use a half-hearted, soul-divided instrument (1 Timothy 4:14-15).

1. The Apostolic example.

- a. "Give heed to My Words" (Acts 2:14, 36, 38, 40).
- b. "Listen to My Words" (Acts 2:22).

2. The example of Jonathan Edwards.

Edwards' preaching, according to his contemporaries, was marked by:

The deep and pervading solemnity of his mind. He had, at all times, a solemn consciousness of the presence of God. This was visible in his looks and his demeanor. It obviously had a controlling influence over all his preparations for the pulpit; and was most manifest in all his public services. Its effect on the audience was immediate and not to be resisted.

Piper, p. 49

Eyewitnesses said of Edwards:

*He had no studied varieties of the voice, and no strong emphasis. He scarcely gestured, or even moved; and he made no attempt by the elegance of his style, or the beauty of his pictures, to gratify the taste, and fascinate the imagination. But, if you mean by eloquence, the power of presenting an important truth before an audience, with overwhelming weight of argument, and with **such intensesness of feeling, that the whole soul of the speaker is thrown into every part of the conception and delivery**; so that the solemn attention of the whole audience is riveted, from the beginning to the close, and impressions are left that cannot be effaced; Mr Edwards was the most eloquent man I ever heard speak.*

Piper, pp. 49-50

3. The example of Thomas Chalmers

Regarding the Scottish preacher Chalmers, it was said:

With a disconcertingly provincial accent, with an almost total lack of dramatic gesture, tied rigidly to his manuscript, with his finger following the written lines as he read ... [with a] bondage to the manuscript and use of long sentences.

When asked the reason for his great effectiveness an eyewitness said, "it is his blood earnestness."

Piper, p. 50

II. THE DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITION OF EARNESTNESS.

A. The Elements That Distinguish It.

1. Negatively: What it does not necessarily involve.

The contrast between Whitefield and Edwards is still more marked. Whitefield, says Ola Winslow, had 'oratorical talents nothing short of amazing' and he employed them so effectively that 'those who followed him lost all sense of rational discrimination'. If this is the explanation of Whitefield's usefulness how are we to account for the same spiritual

results attending 'the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Edwards of Northampton: a preacher of low and moderate voice, a natural way of delivery, and without any agitation of body, or anything else in the manner to excite attention, except his habitual and great solemnity, looking and speaking as in the presence of God'?

In Iain Murray's *Edwards*, p. 175

- a. Dramatic flare and gestures.
- b. Animated and overly emphatic movement.

2. Positively: What it does necessarily involve.

- a. An intensesness and genuine feeling, not mere emotions.
- b. A zeal for God and the good of souls that is self-evident.
- c. An overwhelming weight of argument.
- d. A fervency of spirit.
- e. Blood-earnestness in every part of the sermon.
- f. A pervading solemnity, a seriousness without being somber.

3. There is a pervading solemnity, with joy, that is conscious of God and eternity.

B. The Elements That Destroy Or Diminish Earnestness.

- 1. Light-hearted talkativeness and glib attempts to stir things up.**
- 2. A casualness of demeanor and speech.**
- 3. An atmosphere of levity, triviality and carelessness.**

III. THE DUTY TO BE EARNEST IN PREACHING.

A. It Is The Appointed Means To Save Sinners And Sanctify Saints.

- 1. It pleased God through preaching to save and sanctify (1 Corinthians 1:21).**

The everlasting destiny of sinners hangs in the balance.

No man can give the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save.

Denny

We never reach the innermost room in any man's soul by the expedencies of the showman or buffoon.

Jowett

- 2. Paul specifically requested a prayer for the manner of his preaching. That in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:20).**

B. The Inappropriateness Of Light-Heartedness To Preaching.

- 1. You can dispel seriousness with a light-hearted quip, pun, or witticism.**
- 2. Laughter for laughter's sake and light-heartedness is contrary to the Spirit's design and intent of reaching the heart concerning eternal issues.**
- 3. The atmosphere of true revival is never light (Acts 2:37-38).**

It is a sign of our age that we preachers are far more adept at humor than tears.

Piper

Laughter means people feel good. It means they like you. It means you have moved them. It means you have some measure of power. It seems to have all the marks of successful communication – if the depth of sin and the holiness of God and the danger of hell and need for broken hearts is left out of account. I have been literally amazed at conferences where preachers mention the need for revival and then proceed to cultivate an atmosphere in which it could never come.

Piper, p. 56

IV. DEVELOPING EARNESTNESS.

John Piper gives the following suggestions to develop seriousness and earnestness in preaching:

- A. Strive For Glad-Hearted Earnestness.**
- B. Make Life In The Study A Communion With God: Study On Your Knees.**
- C. Read Those Who Bleed The Bible.**
- D. Contemplate Death And Eternity.**
- E. Remember Your Stricter Accountability.**
- F. Root Yourself In Jesus' Example: Gravity With Gladness.**

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF PREACHING: PREACHING IS TO BE SOUL-PIERCING

Preaching is to be done with an awareness of the deadness and hardness of the unregenerated human heart and the coldness of heart that Christians are often subject to. It is to be done with an awareness that God must move on the heart (2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:4-5). It must be done with the understanding that even in Christians God must work for "it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The preacher must consciously aim to go beyond the head to the heart. We must remember: "The fixedness of the human mind is the wall of Jericho to gospel preaching. God must shake or there will be no shaking." Jim Elliott

I. THE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CONVERSION THAT UNDERLIE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PREACHING.

The Bible is very clear about the nature of a true conversion (1 Thessalonians 1:9). There are a number of assumptions about a true conversion that compel preaching.

A. Spiritual Interest And External Compliance Does Not Necessarily Indicate A Conversion Nor Genuine Spiritual Growth. There Are Different Believing Responses To The Word And Not All Are Saving (Luke 8:4-15).

The following statement describes the lethargic, careless state of the churches prior to the Great-Awakening:

Any degree of religious interest and adherence to forms of religion was considered enough to justify a persons Christian religion, and all who grew up in the Church were commonly treated as belonging to Christ irrespective of evidence.

Iain Murray

B. Profession Of Faith Could Be An Intellectual Assent Only (Simon Magus, Acts 8:13-24; John 2:23-25).

The habit of the preachers was to address their people as though they were all pious and only needed instruction and confirmation. It was not a common thing to proclaim the terrors of a violated law and to insist on the absolute necessity of regeneration.

Archibald Alexander

C. There Is A Need For Many To Correctly Understand What It Means To Be A True Christian.

- 1. The absence of the sense of the evil of sin and the experience of true conviction is prevalent, and common, and often reveals an unregenerate state.**
- 2. The assumption must be removed that you can be savingly related to Christ without a sense of sin that makes salvation necessary, and without a sense of the surpassing delight and joy there is in Christ (John 4:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 1:6).**

You cannot be a true Christian without Christ being your chief delight who satisfies above all else including sin. He is the water who quenches our thirst and the bread that fills our hunger. He is the treasure found in the field that causes us to see all else combined to be of no real value compared to Him (Matthew 13:44). People must not be treated as saved who have never known that they were lost, nor have not been given a sense of the soul-satisfying reality of Christ.

II. AN AIM AND APPROACH TO PREACHING THAT SEEKS TO REACH THE HEART.

A. The Accepted Approach Of Man-Centered Sermons Are Not Calculated To Break Through The Indifference Of The Heart (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1-5).

I know it has long been fashionable to despise a very earnest and pathetic way of preaching, and they only have been valued as preachers who have shown the greatest extent of learning, strength of reason, and correctness of method and language. But I humbly conceive it has been for want of understanding or duly considering human nature that such preaching has been thought to have the greatest tendency to answer the ends of preaching, and the experience of the present and past ages abundantly confirms the same.

Jonathan Edwards in, *Iain Murray's Edwards*, p. 126

Isaac Watts complained: 'There are too many persons who have imbibed and propagate this notion, that it is almost the only business of a preacher to teach the necessary doctrines and duties of our holy religion by a mere explication of the Word of God, without enforcing these things on the conscience by a pathetic address to the heart'. Thomas Hooker gave his view of true biblical preaching when he says the pastor is 'to work upon the will and the affections and by savoury, powerful and affectionate application of the truth delivered, to chase it into the heart, to woo and win the soul to the love and liking, the approbation and practice of the doctrine which is according to godliness.'

In *Iain Murray's Edwards*, p. 120

Increase in speculative knowledge in divinity is not what is so much needed by our people as something else. Men may abound in this sort of light, and have no heat. How much has there been of this sort of knowledge, in the Christian world, in this age! Was there ever an age wherein strength and penetration of reason, extent of learning, expression, did so abound? And yet, was there ever an age, wherein there has been so little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly-mindedness, and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion? Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored as to have their hearts touched, and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching which has the greatest tendency to do this.

Jonathan Edwards in, *Iain Murray's Edwards*, p. 127

B. There Is An Approach To Preaching That Demands The Spirit's Power And More Than Mere Human Ability.

1. The intent of preaching is to move the heart, not just to inform the head!

- a. Negatively: It is not to induce regeneration (James 1:18), only God can make alive.
- b. Positively: It is to convict and disturb. There is a prior work of conviction that precedes true conversion and regeneration.

Yet, if in these sermons he shall find the most important truths exhibited and pressed home on the conscience with that pungency which tends to awaken, convince, humble, and edify; if he shall find that serious strain of piety which, in spite of himself forces upon him a serious frame of mind; if in the perusal, he cannot but be ashamed and alarmed at himself, and in some measure feel the reality and weight of eternal things; if, at least he, like Agrippa, shall be almost persuaded to be a Christian; I presume he will not grudge the time required to peruse what is now offered him. These, if I mistake not, are the great ends to be aimed at all sermons, whether preached or printed, and are ends which can never be accomplished by those modern fashionable discourses which are delivered under the name of sermons.

Jonathan Edwards in, *Iain Murray's Edwards*, p. 126

- (1) People must see their false security, emptiness and need before God (Luke 18:9-14).
- (2) People must be made sensible and conscious of their spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3).
- (3) They must see Christ as their treasure in whom is their supreme delight, a satisfaction that transcends all there is in sin and its pleasures.

- c. Positively: It is to move on the hearts of God's people, either to establish their heart or bring them through repentance to a renewed commitment to serve Christ (Romans 12:1-2, 10, 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; Revelation 2:4-5).

2. An insight towards the nature of man's heart is foundational.

- a. Men will not come to this condition, for they are, in themselves, secure. Men are stupidly senseless; they must be awakened (John 16:7-11; Acts 2:37-38).
- b. A forced examination of themselves and an awakening of the conscience are necessary.
 - (1) The Spirit works in conjunction with the conscience. (Romans 2:14).

...they still have a conscience: 'Conscience...is a principle natural to men: and the work it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong and a retribution.' Men have to be so dealt with that their conscience stares them in the face and they begin to see their need of a priest and sacrifice.

Jonathan Edwards in, *Iain Murray's Edwards*, p 129

- (2) People must be shown and begin to feel their need to fear God's holiness, and to receive the free pardon found in Christ alone.

NOTE: Conviction varies in emphasis and focus in every person. There is no precise pattern, steps, and order to conviction. Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate to people their need to recognize the holiness of God, and to seek the free pardon found in Christ alone. How God does this in each particular case is His business.

- c. The remaining presence of sin must be fully recognized in God's people (Romans 7:22-25). Believers must see their constant need for growth, change and repentance (Revelation 2:4; Philippians 3:10-15).

3. The instrument is the truth powerfully forced upon the conscience (1 Peter 1:12, 25).

- a. Focus efforts where the Spirit focuses His work (John 16:7-11); be Christ-centered (John 16:14, 15)
- b. Feed your own heart on God's truth.

III. THE AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR EARNEST PRAYER.

A. The Priority Of Prayer (Ephesians 6:18-19; Colossians 4:2-3).

B. The Patterns And Examples Of Prayer.

C. The Promise Of Christ To Honor Prayer For Christ-Centered Ministry (John 14:11-15).

THE PREACHED WORD: THE INESCAPABLE MANDATE – 2 Timothy 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION

Calvin's words on the corruption of the church and its failure to preach speak to our time;

Were I to go over the faults of ecclesiastical government in detail, I should never have done. I will, therefore, only point to some of the grosser sort, which cannot be disguised. And, first, the pastoral office itself, as instituted by Christ, has long been in desuetude. His object in appointing Bishops and Pastors, or whatever the name by which they are called, certainly was, as Paul declares, that they might edify the Church with sound doctrine. According to this view, no man is a true pastor of the Church who does not perform the office of teaching. But, in the present day, almost all those who have the name of pastors, have left that work to others. Scarcely one in a hundred of the Bishops will be found who ever mounts the pulpit in order to teach. And no wonder; for bishoprics have degenerated into secular principalities. Pastors of inferior rank, again, either think that they fulfill their office by frivolous performances altogether alien from the command of Christ, or after the example of the Bishops, throw even this part of their duty on the shoulder's of others.

The Necessity of Reforming the Church, p. 19

Paul has spoken of the sufficient Word, the inspired Word, and now he speaks of the preached Word. There are four great realities asserted in the text about the preached Word:

- A. It Is To Be Pursued With All Seriousness (v.1).**
- B. It Is To Be Proclaimed With Readiness (v.2).**
- C. It Is The Proof Of Faithfulness (vv. 3-4).**
- D. It Is A Product Of Sober Mindedness (v. 5).**

I. IT IS TO BE PURSUED WITH ALL-SERIOUSNESS. I SOLEMNLY CHARGE YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS (v. 1).

A. The Responsibility To Preach Is Emphatically Stated, Solemnly Charge You.

1. The root meaning of the word solemnly is 'witness'

To witness is the act of "calling into consciousness something one has experienced which cannot be ignored or forgotten and now which in this sense is brought to the notice of others"(DNTT).

2. To solemnly witness involves confirming a thing by the interposition of a testimony.

It meant "to bear witness, originally under oath," (Thayer), or to warn, exhort, to testify by oath. "Hear, O my people and I will speak; O Israel and I will testify against you; I am your God" (Psalm 50:7). The word, moreover, is a compound which stresses the fact it is a solemn or all-serious witnessing.

3. It concerns ultimate issues of eternal significance.

It is used of issues of great importance and great weightiness, as the following references demonstrate.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish" (Exodus 19:21; also, 2 Kings 17:13, 18).

He solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40).

Send him to my father's house – for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment (Luke 16:27b-28; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:6; Acts 10:42).

B. The Reality Of Accountability For Preaching Is Enforced. In The Presence Of God And Christ.

- 1. The emphasis of the text is that the preacher is being observed and watched by God and Christ.**
- 2. The phrase "in the presence of" has a specific focus that stresses personal accountability.**

a. It is a compound word which literally reads: one who is in the sight of (en hopi hon).

b. It is translated 'face to face' in Exodus 33:11 in the LXX

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11a).

It is the term "presence" in the phrase "bread of the presence" (Exodus 25:30).

c. It involves the idea of "toward which another turns his eyes." it is used in the following verses:

- "The prayers of all the saints...before the throne." (Revelation 8:3)
- "and there is no creature hidden from His sight but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13)

C. It Is A Response Which Alone Is Consistent With A Knowledge Of Divine, Eternal Things Revealed In Scripture. Who Is To Judge The Living And The Dead And By His Appearing And His Kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16).

1. The God-breathed character and authority of Scripture demands careful authoritative proclamation (3:16-17).

2. Christ is the sovereign who will judge all men.

The living and the dead is all inclusive, there are none who escape. He is appointed judge of all (1 Peter 4:5; Acts 17:31). This reality underlies all preaching (Acts 10:42-43).

3. Christ will subjugate His will on the entire earth at His coming.

His personal appearance and the institution of His kingdom speak of His fearful, inescapable authority, which will be exercised in a fearful, but just punishment (Romans 2:1-5; Matthew 23:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10). The kingdom and judgment is the future heavenly one mentioned in context (2 Timothy 4:8, 18).

4. It compels the faithful preacher to preach the Word with a loving heart, and without shame. It is why Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist in verse 5.

II. IT IS TO BE PROCLAIMED WITH READINESS. PREACH THE WORD; BE READY IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT WITH GREAT PATIENCE AND INSTRUCTION.

A. The Mandate To Preach The Word Is Clear And Unmistakable.

1. The emphasis of the term preach (Κερυσσο) is upon authoritative proclamation.

The verb form of the word preach means: "To proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed; to publish openly something which ought to be done. The noun referred to a herald, a messenger vested with public authority, who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons."

Thayer

2. The essence of the term was to indicate the non-negotiable nature of the message heralded.

The Kerux was always under the authority of someone else, whose spokesmen he was. He himself was immune, he conveyed the message and intention of the master. He had therefore, no liberty on his own to negotiate. He was also the announcer of judicial verdicts. What he announced became valid by the act of proclamation. The binding, commanding, and settling nature of this proclamation distinguishes its cognates from angello which refers to the imparting of information...[It] Denotes the man who is commissioned by his ruler or the state to call out with a clear voice some item of news and so to make it known...In Homer, it was used of the attendants of a prince, or senior court officials...the herald's staff, a kind of scepter in their hands makes it clear, that they are carrying out their commission...the chief qualification for office was a loud and clear voice...it was the heralds who called the soldiers to battle and the citizen's to assembly.

DNTT pp.48-50

In the N.T. it [kerusso] is the standing expression for the proclamation of the divine message of salvation, and differs from didaskein (Matt. iv. 23, ix. 35) in that it means simply the making known, the announcement, whereas didaskein denotes continuous instruction in the contents and connections of the message – euangellizein (Luke viii. 1) again characterizes the contents.

Cremer, p.355

B. The Message Of The Christian Preacher Is 'The Word' Not Their Own Ideas.

A biblical message must come from the text itself. In other words, in true biblical preaching the text is not a launching pad for your own ideas! The substance and content of the sermon must come from the context, word-meanings and the bringing forth of the author's original meaning and intent. In short, preaching must be expository. It must be an exposition – a bringing to light – of the divinely revealed text. This alone gives divine authority and works effectually in the hearers. Expository preaching in its purest form is a verse by verse exposition of a Biblical text. It alone ensures that the original meaning and application of the Word of God in its context is brought forth.

C. The Mind-Set Is To Be One Of Readiness (vv. 3-4).

The preacher is not to be diverted from his main task. Fads and current trends are not to diminish his conviction. He must herald the God-breathed Word (3:16).

D. The Ministry Of The Word Is Comprehensive In Its Ability To Edify And Meet Needs.

1. The Word reprove: It shows where we have sinned.

a. The general idea of the term reprove:

The basic, general meaning of the word (ελεγχηο) is: To call to account, to refute with a suggestion of shame; it is that by which a thing is proved.

b. The objective aspect of the term reprove:

In its objective sense it means: To substantiate a charge and furnish proof, to expose, make evident (Ephesians 5:11, 13) with unanswerable arguments.

- c. The subjective aspect of the term reprove:

In a subjective or inward sense it refers to: A sensible realization of guilt, a breaking of insensibility so guilt is felt (1 Corinthians 14:24), a parallel idea is to cut to the heart, to pierce (Acts 2:37).

2. The Word rebukes: It cause us to turn from sin and renew our commitment to follow the Lord.

- a. The word (επιτιμοο) means, to charge with fault, to chide, or censure severely. It means to rebuke in order to curb. It was formerly used of that which restrained.
- b. The meaning of rebuke in order to curb and redirect is seen in the following usage:

He turned and rebuked them, and said You do not know what kind of spirit you are of. (Luke 9:55).

Why are you afraid, you men of little faith? Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. (Matthew 8:26).

Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. (Matthew 17:18).

Some children were brought to Him...and the disciples rebuked them. (Matthew 19:13 - cp. Luke 23:40).

3. The Word exhorts: The term (παρακαλεο) has three aspects of meaning.

It encourages people wearied by troubles; it challenges people lagging in Spirit; and it consoles people hurt or brokenhearted by loss and sorrow.

E. The Manner Of Preaching Must Be Marked With All Patience And Instruction.